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# THE JEW IN OUR DAY

## *Books by Waldo Frank*

### STORY

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Rahab (1922)  
City Block (1922)  
Holiday (1923)  
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### HISTORY

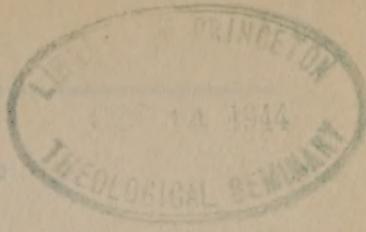
- Our America (1919)  
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America Hispana (1931) *reissued as* South of Us (1939)  
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Primer Mensaje à la América Hispana (1930)  
(*pub. only in Spanish*)  
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Chart for Rough Water (1940)  
Ustedes y Nosotros: Nuevo Mensaje à Ibero América (1942)  
(*pub. only in Spanish*)  
The Jew In Our Day (1944)

### THEATER

- New Year's Eve (1929)



# *The Jew In Our Day*

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BY

WALDO ✓ FRANK

*With an Introduction by REINHOLD NIEBUHR*

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NEW YORK

DUELL, SLOAN AND PEARCE

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*to three brothers*

JACQUES MARITAIN

LEWIS MUMFORD

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

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## PREFATORY NOTE

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AFTER Reinhold Niebuhr had written his introduction to this volume, he sent it to me with the doubt that it served the purpose well, and with the modest suggestion that it might be better as a postscript. It is true that the reader will get more from my friend's pages if he turns to them (or returns) after having read the book itself. But there are good reasons why Reinhold Niebuhr's words should stand at the threshold. They strike a note of humane concern for the lives of the generality of Jews, which I am glad to have heard at the book's beginning: a note which I did not perhaps sufficiently stress, because the urgency of Israel's central problem fixed my attention elsewhere. That it is Reinhold Niebuhr, rather than I, who strikes this note is a symbolic action whose deep and beautiful significance will, I hope, be clear to the reader of the volume. In my postscript, I have dealt in detail with Dr. Niebuhr's criticisms, specifying agreements and dissents.

The book, although it reveals the progress of its author's thought and experience as he was increasingly confronted through the years by the Jews' growing crisis, and although it therefore may be said to have some organic unity, consists of essays individually written and published: I in *The Saturday Evening Post*;

II and V in *The Menorah Journal*; III in *The New Republic*; IV in *The Synagogue*; VI B in the Centennial Volume of Congregation Mishkan Israel of New Haven; VI A and VII in *The Contemporary Jewish Record*. Most of them were republished in part or in full by other periodicals of the United States, Latin America, and Europe.

The chapter "Israel in America Hispana" was originally a lecture which I delivered from notes in Spanish before the *Asociación Hebráica* of Buenos Aires, and later before the *Asociación Hebráica* of Santiago, Chile. From the stenographic transcript I made my adaptation into English. Only one of the chapters exists within the covers of a book: "With Marx, Spinoza," which I have borrowed from "In the American Jungle," a volume of my essays whose American edition is out of print.

Special acknowledgments are due to my friend, Adolph S. Oko, at whose suggestion several of the essays were written; and without whose insistence they might not have been written at all.

W. F.

*Truro, Massachusetts*

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## INTRODUCTION

By  
*Reinhold Niebuhr*

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## INTRODUCTION

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THIS introduction to Waldo Frank's book on *The Jew in Our Day* does not have the purpose of commanding his thoughts upon this subject to the reader. That would be presumptuous. Its purpose is rather to seek to illumine the issue under discussion by developing points of common conviction and of different emphases which we have explored together in years of intimate friendship with one another.

Our common convictions are proof of the possibility of converging upon the truth from varying perspectives, about which he speaks so eloquently in the final chapter of this volume. I find this volume a profound and moving statement and elaboration of the prophetic genius of Judaism. Jewish spirituality combines heaven and earth, as it were. It does not separate soul from body or mind from nature but understands man and history in the unity of man's physical and spiritual life. In this it distinguishes itself from Greek modes of thought; and lies at the foundation of the world-affirming side of Christianity and of ethical seriousness in our Western culture. I know of no one who understands this genius of Jewish religion better than Mr. Frank. He expresses it beyond the restraints of tradi-

tional Jewish legalism and in a deeper dimension than those secular idealists among the Jews who have dissipated the religious inheritance of Judaism while maintaining the prophetic passion for justice. It is on this point where our minds and souls have met. I have, as a Christian theologian, sought to strengthen the Hebraic-prophetic content of the Christian tradition; and he has sought to recover the full vigor of the prophetic tradition for Jewish culture.

I differ with him on points in which he seems to me to sacrifice one side of prophetic teaching: its sense of the relation of man to nature and necessity, for the other side: its sense of man's relation to the eternal, the universal, that is, to God.

Mr. Frank would solve the Jewish problem by recalling the Jewish people to their prophetic heritage. If they are to suffer, he would have them "suffer for a cause," believing that to "suffer for nothing" is pathetic rather than creative and tragic. He meditates upon the injustices from which Jews suffer and concludes that "the pity is that there is so little reason for this discrimination." This means that he would like to lift the suffering of his people to the level of redemptive martyrdom, whereas most Jews actually suffer neither because they are much better than we are (as Mr. Frank would like) or worse than we (as their detractors claim); but merely because they are a nation scattered among the nations and thereby commit the offense of being "different," an offense which fans the semi-con-

scious pride of all ethnic and cultural groups into flame. Mr. Frank's view of Jewish destiny is that they should actualize the position of the "suffering servant" as pictured in Isaiah 53. The manner in which he makes this prophetic conception relevant to the modern situation is a very nice proof of his profound engagement with the prophetic genius of his people. On the religious and moral side the Jews distinguish themselves from other nations in being a nation which has sought desperately to be "the church," to be the protagonist, not of its own cause, but of the universal and divine cause. On the ethnic-political side they are distinguished by the fact of the Diaspora. They are a nation scattered among the nations. Mr. Frank would accept whatever disabilities and difficulties arise for his people from the second fact, if only he could enoble this martyrdom by making it more purely prophetic.

As I see it, this solution states rather than solves the religious problem of the Jews; and underestimates their purely mundane problem of existing as a people. In that sense it violates that part of the prophetic tradition which understands the earthy basis of our existence. Mr. Frank believes that "to be a Jew merely because I was born one is shameful." This can be said only from the standpoint of a nation which is church rather than nation. But such a church leaves its member in an ambiguous position. It is asking him to make a free choice of a spiritual task and responsibility. This is a religious vision transcending the limits of nature-

history, among which are the facts of ethnic distinctions. It is no more shameful to be born a Jew than to be born an American or a Frenchman or a German. Having been born a Jew or an American it is, if not shameful, at least less than fully human to serve only this particular nation or people to the exclusion of the whole human community. Exclusive nationalism is shameful; but there is a difference between exclusive nationalism and the mere fact of national distinction. Exclusive nationalism is a spiritual corruption which arises out of the natural and innocent fact of national distinction; just as the vision of the universal, which transcends race and nation, is a spiritual achievement arising upon the basis of ethnic particularity.

An American or Frenchman does not have to will to destroy his people as a people in order to serve God or the total human community. The survival of the nation is more or less guaranteed by the security of a "homeland." But the Jew is in the exposed position of trying to express a collective survival impulse under the hazards of a Diaspora. During the medieval period the survival was actually guaranteed in part by the more or less static intolerance of the gentile world. The modern period of bourgeois democracy opened the democratic world as a second homeland for the Jews. But the dynamic corruption of modern anti-Semitism has proved that security to be less reliable than we thought. I am not suggesting that Nazi corruption need permanently to infect the democratic world. But this period of history has certainly proved bourgeois uni-

versalism and the modern liberal dream of an essentially race-less world to be an illusion. It might be worth observing that if Nazi corruption had not occurred and the liberal world had continued to go from grace to grace the Jew might have faced extinction by way of assimilation. That is a more painless form of death; but it is death nevertheless. Sooner or later the strong collective survival impulse which lives in every people, would have had to assert itself. The Jew would have had to develop his own intolerance in a tolerant world, if he had desired survival as a nation scattered among the nations.

Now, the fact that the Jew has actually survived over many centuries is undoubtedly an achievement of the religious quality of the Jewish culture, as Mr. Frank points out. He is right in asserting that the Jew distinguishes himself primarily by this religious overtone in his culture. Mr. Frank has as his ideal the broadening of this culture, the reaffirmation of its prophetic meaning, in such a way that the Jew will give the world an example of the particular (a nation) serving, not itself, but the universal (the community of mankind). But this leaves one embarrassment out of account. How can the "particular" be a servant of the universal, if the life of the particular has no security? It is of course possible for individuals, in the highest reaches of ethical freedom, to sacrifice their lives for a cause greater than they. But is that possible for a nation? Is it possible, in other words, for a nation to be a church?

Without detracting at all from the remarkable spiritual achievements of the Jewish people I do not think it unfair to say that they have proved that this cannot be done. They have had to use a religion with universal overtones as a means of survival for the nation.

Mr. Frank speaks appreciatively of what orthodox Jewish legalism accomplished in preserving the health of a people in a hostile world. But in another connection he bewails the fact that some of the great prophets and seers of modern Jewish life had to leave the confines of their traditional religion to accomplish their task. I do not think that he fully appreciates the depth of this dilemma. The great prophets of Israel, particularly Jeremiah and the second Isaiah, frequently spoke the word of God "against Israel." They did indeed speak this word on the basis of the conviction that God had particularly chosen Israel. Amos, in fact, combines the idea of a special destiny ("you only have I chosen") with the idea of a special punishment ("therefore will I visit you with your iniquities") in a very dialectical way. It is this dialectic of prophetism which cannot fully work itself out in the modern situation. It cannot be fully developed, because the word of God spoken against the nation in all universal monotheism, can hardly be entertained when the nation is faced with annihilation. This dilemma is illustrated not only in the fact that Jewish secular prophetic idealism must so frequently express its universal vision and task by leaving the synagogue. It is also illustrated by the conflict in the liberal Jewish community between the

nationalist and the universalist emphases in the Jewish faith.

Thus a group of liberal Rabbis recently accused Zionist Rabbis of being nationalists and of being thereby untrue to the monotheistic implications of their faith. The Zionist Rabbis have on the other hand implied that the universalism of their critics represents a kind of treason against their people. I think the Zionist religious leaders have a firmer hold upon the historical realities. I share their political aim, though I would not claim that a Jewish homeland could be a total solution for the Jews' political problem. Nevertheless the liberal Rabbis who regard Zionism as "nationalism" and as a too exclusive implementation of a monotheistic faith are religiously right.

This situation in which one party is politically right and religiously wrong, and the other party is religiously right and politically wrong, is a perfect illustration of the depth of the dilemma. The dilemma arises from the fact that the two dimensions of history, the dimension of necessity and of freedom, of nature and of the eternal, have become confused in Jewish life since the Diaspora. We are by necessity Jews or gentiles, Germans or Frenchmen. The corruptions which arise in human freedom make these distinctions something more than an innocent fact; for race pride and prejudice become associated with the distinctions. But if we are challenged in the freedom of the human spirit to efface the corruptions of freedom it ought not to be necessary to carry the cure down to the necessities of

nature. Americans ought to be challenged religiously and ethically not to regard America as the sole end of their life. But they ought not to be forced to desire, or be an accomplice in, the destruction of America in order to achieve this purpose.

Mr. Frank's solution of the Jewish problem is to demand of the Jews that they achieve an ideal relation between the particular and the universal. He does not ask for the destruction of a people to accomplish this purpose, though his conception of a martyred people which suffers, not for being what it is, but for being what all nations ideally ought to be, comes perilously near to the idea of a noble death, as all conceptions of martyrdom are bound to come. But he leaves two things out of account: (1) He is asking the highest idealism of a people which is least secure in its survival. An American may condemn the pride of a powerful America and wish that a divine judgment might humble this too proud nation. But unconsciously this religious insight will express itself against the background of national security. (2) Mr. Frank does not take into consideration that even without these special disabilities no entire nation can be so God-dedicated. What will he do with the Jews who suffer, not tragically but pathetically? What will he do about the injustice visited upon them not because they are ideal bearers of universal values but merely because they are what they are, a minority group in various nations?

It is quite right to call attention to the fact, as Mr. Frank does, that Hitler's enmity toward the Jews is

partly prompted by their devotion to universal ideals. On the one side of his propaganda Hitler identifies the Jews with "liberalism, universalism, pacifism, democracy and Christianity." Here demonic nationalism faces universalism. But on the other side of the propaganda Nazism is a form of ethnic primitivism which seeks to re-establish the ethnic homogeneity of the primitive tribe and wishes to destroy the Jew because he is different. It might be observed that while Nazi racial arrogance is more explicit than our own variety, no ethnic majority has ever completely overcome the sin of regarding that which is different as inferior. Perhaps we never will conquer this sin completely. We can certainly mitigate it in a democratic society; but it may be that ethnic minorities will always be exposed to a certain degree of contumely. I would not give up the battle against this evil in a democratic society; but if I were a Jew I would not trust the historical processes too much and would not be too sure about the elimination of these evils. That is why the demand for a Jewish homeland is justified, though we must not for that reason give up the battle for tolerance in the democratic world.

It may be quite right for Mr. Frank, speaking from inside the Jewish community, to call upon his people to rise to the stature of heroic and redemptive suffering. But when one looks at the matter from the outside, it is necessary to think in terms of justice for the ordinary Jew, the *inertial* Jew, in Mr. Frank's phrase, who suffers not because he is a prophet but because he

is a Jew. He must be accorded some decent security; just as a Norwegian has the right to security as a Norwegian, even if he is not an ideal Norwegian who has a full understanding of the relation of a nation to the community of mankind.

But even when the matter is looked at from the inside of a community with a great ethnic and religious tradition, there may be some question about the adequacy of Mr. Frank's approach. It is right that he should seek to recall his people to the profounder aspects of their prophetic tradition. But religious prophetism is too profound to be available as a possibility for a whole people. What will he do with those who cannot rise to the higher vision? And what will he do about the fact that all men fall short, in a sense, of the highest religious and ethical possibilities?

If this problem is fully explored it becomes apparent that there must be a political solution of the problem of the Jews without reference to the final religious problem. I think it also becomes apparent that the religious problem is more complex than is usually realized. It is difficult for a Christian theologian to speak upon this religious issue without seeming to express the characteristic prejudices of one faith, judging another. We have for that reason, on the whole, maintained a discreet silence on the religious issue. We have maintained this silence also, because we realized that in the present historical situation it is not possible for the Jew to do anything else but relate his religion on the one hand to the task of historical survival, while

on the other hand he explores its universal overtones.

Complete candor requires that this religious problem be fully explored at some time. An honest exploration of the problem would have to include recognition of the fact that even universal religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, which are no longer bound to an ethnic group in principle, can be, and are, used as instruments of the will to survive and of the will to power of particular ethnic groups at various times. There is never a complete devotion to the universal without the corruption of particularism in any spiritual achievement of history. Yet it is necessary to be clear about what is possible and what is impossible in terms of principle. In principle a faith which calls upon men to rise above the necessities and limits of nature and to avow universal values, cannot also be used as the instrument of survival, though it ought to recognize the legitimacy of this survival impulse. In principle it must rise, as did the faith of the prophets, to a sublime unconcern for the fate of a people. This sublime unconcern of the prophets for political destiny represents a point of religious transcendence where religion and politics stand in contradiction.

I do not see how it is possible to develop this prophetic overtone of high religion in the Jewish community fully, if the nation does not have a greater degree of socio-political security. If it should achieve such security the religious issue could be discussed without the present embarrassment. In such a discussion it would become apparent that while there is

always an ideal possibility of a nation or a people to rise to the heights of becoming a redemptive community among the nations, yet on the whole the vision of such a possibility is the vision of a few. There must be a way for the few to express this faith without imperiling the survival of the many who do not or cannot rise to it.

This means that there must be a greater distinction between political strategies and religious visions. The former are bound to the necessities and limits of nature to a larger degree than the latter. The latter deal with universal man as he rises in the freedom of spirit to survey the total human scene or to place it by faith under the judgment of God, transcending all human judgments and all human necessities. It means that in the final analysis a nation cannot be a church, though it must be gratefully recorded that the Jews have come closer to accomplishing this impossible task than any other people.

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

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## I: THE JEWS ARE DIFFERENT

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## THE JEWS ARE DIFFERENT

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A WHILE ago I was having tea at the house of friends in a typical old New England village. It was almost time for me to leave when the talk got around to the kind of folks the Germans must be.

"You have lived in many lands," my hostess said. "You tell us. How was it possible for the Germans to obey such leaders? It seems to me, if I had a government that ordered me to hate and oppress the Jews, for instance, I just wouldn't do it, that's all."

"That's what I can't understand," said the husband. "This terrible prejudice against the Jews; there must be some reason for it. Isn't there some book? I'm too busy a man for books, but if there's some simple volume—"

"There are hundreds of books," I said. "After you'd gone through them, you'd still have to work out the explanation for yourself."

"You mean"—the lady was horrified—"you mean there are reasons why the Nazis hate the Jews?"

"Yes," I said. "Good reasons."

I had got up. My friends stood hesitant and troubled. I found I was getting angry. Not at them and not at Herr Hitler; I was angry at my own kind, including myself. Call us the "intellectuals," the folk who are

supposed to study the truth and to explain it. Here were two fellow citizens of good will and good intelligence, genuinely troubled over a phenomenon that has assumed world-wide importance. The Fuehrer of a world coalition with millions of followers—not to name his secret admirers in every land—deliberately, in every speech he makes, blames the Jews for this world disaster of war. And though hundreds of coolheaded men in every country have riddled his arguments, exposed the absurdity of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, proved the falsity of every count against the Jews, when has anyone ever made quite clear why the accusations are made, and why, since they are false, they have gained credence among people as advanced as the Germans, and myriad others in other lands, not omitting our own? And here was I, being asked an honest question by good friends, and the best I could do was run away!

It was suddenly clear to me that if the Fascists have drawn rankly rotten herrings across the trail of the truth concerning the Jews, the Jews themselves have not been guiltless in spreading the confusion. Their own herrings to blur the scent of the trail of truth are subtler, politer. But perhaps in the long run they are also dangerous. That is why I write this. My friends in their white New England town will probably read it. It is a sort of penance for my refusal to answer a heavy question over a fragile teacup.

The myths invented by the enemies of the Jews belong largely to the realm of demonology. They are of

interest, not because of their flagrant lies, but because of the element of distorted truth that is sometimes in them. Take the classic horror story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which, fantastically, has the Jews all over the world knit in a plot to ruin civilization in order to win world power. International capitalism and international communism, by this legend, are parts of the Jewish plan; journalism, the manufacture of armaments, movements for peace and for war, not to mention such assaults on the human mind as Einstein's theory of relativity and other contributions to modern science, are all aimed to subjugate the peoples of the world to the Jews; and in this grandiose scheme the modern Jewish citizen of the United States and the orthodox Jewish pietist of Eastern Europe—although they cannot speak with each other—are supposed to be conspirators.

Of course, if there is any truth in this, the moon is made of green cheese. Yet wait! In a sense, have the Jews not been "world conspirators"? Were not the Prophets, were not Jesus Christ and the disciples, conspirators to conquer the world and to snatch men's souls away from Caesar? In a way, are not all saints of all ages and all religions, Jewish or Christian, "conspirers" against the common order? So we see that in these Protocols there is a caricature of a truth.

Some of the lies, however, seem to be pure falsehood—the statement, for instance, that the Jews are bad patriots. The German Jews in the last war had a larger number of enlistments than their proportion of the

population, and in every modern country the Jews have shown passionate loyalty in every crisis. The myth that the Jews control the wealth of nations has, of course, been disproved a hundred times by cold figures. For example, in the United States they hold only a very slight fraction of the industrial and financial power. On the other hand, the blanket blame given the Jews for all the sins of business, although it is unjust, has perhaps a certain meaning, if one look deep enough.

I recall the time I was the guest of a wool manufacturer in Yorkshire, England. This most courteous and excellent gentleman suddenly launched into a tirade against the Jews because of their "business methods." They had ruined the textile industry, he railed; degraded it from the "high standards" of his grandfather's day.

I asked him, "What about the child labor practiced in your grandfather's day in your mill? Would you generalize from that practice into a blanket condemnation of the English?"

"Twould be most unfair-r," he burred in his north-country accent. "'Twas the times that hadn't learned the evil."

"And the sharp practices of certain Jewish businessmen today? Would you dare say that wasn't also the times?"

He was convinced, but as I drove away in the morning I found that I was not. I was angry with the Jews. They're not a bit worse than their Yankee, British or

French competitors. But I found I was angry, unreasonably perhaps, because I felt they ought to be better. Perhaps this unconscious claim of a high standard for the Jews is a clue, as we shall see, to the real meanings of the mystery.

Falsehoods that are self-contradictory get along very well together, since the bed they lie in is not of logic. Thus, with the mythical accusation that the Jews lead business goes the legend that they lead all the revolutions. So as not to go back too far, let us name a few of the masters of revolution during the past two centuries. We find such men as Rousseau, Voltaire, Robespierre, Locke, Thomas Paine, Fourier, Proudhon, Marx, Engels, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Nietzsche, Liebknecht, Jaurès, Lenin, Trotsky, Eugene Debs and Stalin. Two of these men were Jews. And if the list were enlarged, numbers of Russians, Germans, Frenchmen, Chinese, and so on, would be added before another Jew of like importance.

One more accusation against the Jews has enormous weight among the simple men and women of the countryside; among those who instinctively love the soil and distrust the civilization of the cities. The Jews, they believe, are city people, and hence inveterate enemies of the Good. This is a dangerous half-truth. The values of the Jews, the religion and the culture by whose strength they have survived, are all fruits of a pastoral and agrarian people. The Jews were always farmers until, in certain countries of Europe, they were driven off the land into ghettos. That this did not alienate

them from their agrarian-pastoral roots is proved by the fact that they stuck to their old customs; and it is being proved eloquently today by their passionate return to the soil whenever the chance offers. In Palestine are Jewish youth who have perhaps walked thousands of miles from city slums to turn into enthusiastic farmers. And there is evident today, in countries as far apart as the United States, Siberia, and Argentina, a strong movement of young Jews back to the soil.

Americans like my friends of the New England village are much too clear of head and heart to believe the anti-Semitic demonologies and half-truths. They prefer to turn for their instructions to the philo-Semites or to the Jews themselves. And the irony is that here they fare little better.

One group of Jews, for instance, small but vociferous these past years, was headed, until his recent death, by a kind of fuehrer, Lieutenant Jabotinsky. They are "militant Jewish nationalists." By blood, they insist, the Jews are a nation, Palestine is their country, and the "Arab interlopers"—who have been living there a mere millennium and a half—must be chased out by fire and sword. To these Jewish fanatics, race is everything. Possibly, they say, the Jews have outgrown their God—even as the radical Nazis would declare that the Germans have outgrown Christianity—never their "blood destiny."

But this is only an extreme minority group. A far larger body of Zionists would answer: "No! We are a people by culture, and our sole arms are of peace. We

obey the Prophets who twenty-six hundred years ago bade us beat swords into plowshares. What counts in Palestine is not arsenals, not synagogues, but schools. And we shall co-operate with the Arabs. Nevertheless, it is true: we are a peculiar people, although today we share our God with all the west. We are a people of science and international good will. Moses has been replaced by Einstein. But like every nation, we demand our country and our state."

Then there are the orthodox Jews, who reject these rationalists and nationalists, and humbly but fiercely follow the 613 commandments of the Torah and let Jehovah—in Hebrew—answer all the questions. And side by side with them are the so-called Reformed Jews, whose temples, in ritual and spirit, are nearer to the Protestant churches than to the synagogues of the orthodox; who ignore both Hebrew and Yiddish, and regard their Judaism as a mere ethical code scarcely distinguishable from Unitarianism.

Here in the United States is still another group of Jews, and among the most influential. These are the Jews who deny that their Jewishness means anything at all except a racial memory like that of any other people settled in America and Americanized, lock, stock and barrel. Penetrate as deep as you can, they challenge you, into their business methods, into their family mores, into their basic attitudes toward their fellow men—they insist you will find nothing that is specifically Jewish. Their answer to the persecution of the Jews is: "Superstition" or "the old scapegoat habit

of the ignorant mind." Their reply to social prejudice is: "Why do you discriminate against me? In my virtues and in my vices, I am just like you."

A recent article in *The Saturday Evening Post* was by one of the members of this group. A Chicago lawyer, a public servant of long and tested standing, looks at the millennial heritage of the Jews and in utter sincerity finds "there is nothing in it." With his keen legal mind he examines this "separate people," this people persecuted for its differences of religion and culture, and wipes them all away! Virtually he says: the customs of the Jewish past count no more than the peculiar Teutonic customs of Mr. Willkie's ancestors—when they wore bearskins and carried clubs—count in his actual character. The club and the bearskin were not despicable in their time; indeed they were tokens of valor, and this valor the American descendants of the Germans now express in good American terms. Likewise, the synagogue and the Talmud were tokens of citizenship in a medieval world, excellent in their time and place, and the Jewish descendants now express their citizenship, like Mr. Willkie, in modern American forms.

This much is certain—the men who talk this way are sincerely convinced; and the thousands of consciously assimilated American Jews who agree as to their utter identity with American ways are sincerely convinced. For them, the subject should be closed, and anyone who opens it again with the old slogans of "Jewish differences" is an obstructionist, a fascist or a fool.

But no one else is convinced. Thousands of other Jews who are equally loyal to America and to democracy, but who see themselves differently and perhaps more deeply, are not convinced. And millions of other Americans—I rule out the unconscious fascist in our midst who hates the Jews for reasons we shall understand—millions of Americans of good will, loyal to the democratic faith, are also not convinced, even though they would be stumped if you asked them to explain their doubt. You may prove to them till Doomsday that an American of Jewish extraction is just like an American of German or Polish or Bohemian or Irish extraction. They won't be able to answer you, but they won't believe you. And they won't believe you, not because they are vicious or ignorant or even stubborn; they won't believe you because of a deep intuition—by which I mean a kind of knowledge, suffused, organic and unfocused, for which they have no word.

Now, "intuition," as I have defined it, is as dangerous as it is valuable; valuable because it touches truths not otherwise accessible to us; dangerous because it can go wrong. Intuition does not come to consciousness in words which our critical intelligence can test; therefore, we are liable to let it lead us to false conclusions.

I will give an example. The man in the street has this vague intuition that his Jewish neighbor is "somehow different." As we shall see, there's truth in that. Along comes someone who, for sinister reasons of his own, explains, "Sure, the Jew's different, because he's secretly serving the Elders of Zion in a conspiracy for

world conquest." The man in the street, like every member of a group, has an instinctive distrust of differences within the group; perhaps in addition, as a Christian believer, he has a religious memory of dislike for the Jews who, after all, deny his Saviour; and he is confused and scared by the horrible condition of the world. "There must be some reason for this dreadful state of the world" he tells himself, and has no explanation. If the anti-Semitic explanation is given often and cleverly, and the world state darkens, he may end up an anti-Semite. His conclusion is false, but it started, do not forget, from a true intuition: *the Jews are different.*

That's an instance of why intuitions are dangerous. But nothing is gained by denying the intuition; it goes on living and working below the level of argument, because it knows it is right. The Jew who insists that Jewish Americans are "just like Polish or Irish or Italian Americans" may be so good a lawyer, so loyal an American, that he would grace the Supreme Court of the United States; nevertheless, he ignores something that the man in the street knows, however vaguely. And if this is true, to deny the essential difference of the Jews is to play into the hands of the enemy of both the Jews and American democracy. For if you refuse to recognize the existence of the real reason behind the common man's intuition by denying the intuition, he won't believe you, but he will be more open to the false and vicious reasons, such as the fascists provide.

This is one fundamental cause of the enormous initial

gains made by the fascists among the nations of the world. They gave the people bad reasons for many of their intuitions, but they at least did not deny the intuitions. Whereas the democracies too often simply sneered at the people's intuitions as stuff and nonsense.

## 2

Now at last I can state my thesis. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to proving what it means. The Jews are different. Even if they do not know it themselves, they are different, and their difference in our dominantly Anglo-Saxon America is not just like the racial difference of Americans whose forebears were Italians, Germans, Irish and Slavs. The intuition of the common citizen in this is right; in this, he knows more about the Jews than hundreds of thousands of Jews actually know about themselves.

The difference of the Jews is not, however, what the fascists and anti-Semites say it is. What it is, we shall see; and then we shall understand why the enemies of democracy, under whatever guise, must hate the Jews; why they must take the offensive against the Jews—with typical anti-democratic strategy—by giving their false explanations of the Jews' difference. By this means they steal a march on the pro-democratic people, who, if they understood their intuition of the Jews' difference, would know that this difference is an ally, an added strength in their own camp.

But the bitterest irony of the situation is that there

are Jews themselves who deny their own peculiar value in a world struggling for democracy, and thereby play straight into the hands of the arch enemy of America, of democracy and of the Jewish people.

What, then, are the Jews? And what, even if unconsciously, do they stand for? Let me begin by simply stating what I believe they are not. There is a philo-Semiticism in the world which I disagree with. In fact, I have often had to smile at myself when I found myself arguing against some of my friends who are devout Christians and who make superior claims for the Jews—for their intelligence, morality, civic virtues—claims which, in my experience, the Jews do not deserve. Man for man, woman for woman, I find the Jews very far from being “the best or brightest people in the world,” as some noble Christians are pleased to call them. I think, on the whole, the French, the Spaniards, the Norwegians, the Argentineans and Brazilians are individually more intelligent than the Jews. As a collective group at its best, there is nothing in Jewish history to match the pure intellectual power of the ancient Greeks and Hindus.

So much for sheer brains. When it comes to artistic talents, the Mexicans, the Negroes, the Welsh and the Russians, in my judgment, are more generally gifted. In civic and social virtues, all the British and Scandinavian peoples, the Dutch, and such small Latin-American nations as Costa Rica and Uruguay have the Jews greatly outclassed. As to business and personal morality, openmindedness, openhandedness, and the

like, the Jews seem to me, by and large, to gravitate to the middle average of the class and country to which they belong, and to which they are always passionately loyal. To say the Jews are more honest merchants than their neighbors is as wrong as the accusation of my Yorkshire friend who blamed them for all that is bad in modern business methods, which they emphatically did not invent. Even those who do not like the Jews usually admit that they make good family men and women. Most of them do—if one's standards are not too high. By the same standards, so do most other Americans—and Europeans.

Man for man, woman for woman, Jews are not appreciably smarter or stupider, better or worse, than other men, other women. They are different because they issue from a great and potent tradition which for more than three thousand years—despite innumerable changes and disasters, due to the changing world and to their own development—has kept its continuous identity and its one general direction. And they are different, not only because this tradition works in them—although perhaps unconsciously—but also because it affects other people, all people, in their attitude toward them.

The modern Jew may be indifferent, even hostile, to the enormous fact of his tradition; he shares it, nevertheless. He may honestly see no distinction between himself and his gentile brother, may honestly despise Bible, Talmud and synagogue as relics of “the barbarous customs of his fathers.” If a man lies down on

the deck of a fast steamer, he is still moving; if a man runs against its direction, he is still moving with it. Any Jew who knows he is a Jew and has, however vaguely or antagonistically, some sense of Jewish tradition and some experience of the state of the Jews in the modern world, is deeply affected. Though his conscious tastes be more Yankee than Vermont maple sugar, he will have traits, responses, sensibilities, qualities of mind and heart and habit, rates of nerve reaction and of attitude—perhaps all hidden from him—that are different, because he is Jewish. To call all this “the same” as in a man whose ancestors were Poles or Italians or Germans is shallow nonsense, and the man in the street knows it.

Even if we granted the impossible—that the Jew was not inwardly touched by his agelong and immense tradition, the surrounding gentile attitude toward him and toward it would affect him and change him. Much of the peculiar intensity of the Jews, their frequent overambitiousness, restlessness, oscillation between servility and arrogance, is the result of the strain that is theirs constantly from childhood in a gentile world which, however friendly, looks on them as Jewish. If for no other reason than that the Jewish boy in his Chicago or St. Louis school is made to *feel* a difference, there will *be* a difference suffused throughout his nature and his years.

But if this is true, at its lowest terms, of those who are Jews “only in name,” what of the vast majority, the millions of Jews who in one form or another have

been actively nurtured and bred within the Jewish tradition? What is the tradition of the Jews?

## 3

The tradition of the Jews is the life story of the Jews. More than three thousand years ago, a tiny pastoral people wedged in a semidesert strip of land between Egypt, Assyria and Babylon—great nations whose cultures have long since become dust—began an extraordinary journey that was to lead them to the far corners of the earth. That journey was the seeking of a way of life which would bring down to earth, in terms of everyday behavior, the idea of a universal yet intimate God who was lovingly concerned with the life of every one of His children. The beginnings of this barbarous people were of course crude. But it was not many centuries before they had matured into the high vision of the Prophets, who expressed for the first time in history a number of ideas that are still unrealized—even as democracy is still unrealized.

One idea of these pastoral Prophets, who were both poets and politicians, was that to worship God meant to practice mercy and justice with all mankind. Another idea was that the history of mankind must be the progressive realization of love—of the Golden Rule. A third idea was that every man and woman, of whatever race or condition, being the child of God, possessed sovereign dignity, an individual responsibility, in the enactment of God's plan for earthly justice. Thus

was born, more than two thousand years before America was discovered, the American promise and the American purpose. Thus was stated, by a little folk of pastors and farmers, the idea of democracy whose enemy is today embodied in Germany and Japan.

Other peoples had prophets—the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Hindus, for instance. The most extraordinary trait of the Jews was that they actually strove to make the vision of their prophets into the common deeds of their lives. In the form of Christianity, their vision conquered Rome, created Europe and all our modern world. Meantime, the Jews, in ways that varied according to the land they dwelt in and to the treatment they received, continued to live their great tradition. The notion that the Jews became a mere shadow of themselves, after their most exalted Word had become manifest in Jesus Christ, is refuted by the bare facts of history. A played-out people could hardly have survived fifteen centuries of Christian Europe and Mohammedan Africa. A degenerate people is weak and sterile, and the Jews not only continued to live and to make progress in their own religion but also to feed Western civilization.

Their philosophers and poets from the year 1000 A.D. inspired the medieval Christian Republic of Europe. Their scholars and moralists from the year 1300 A.D. nourished the theologians of the Reformation and the poets of the Renaissance. About the same time their scientists, mariners and map makers made possible the voyages of discovery which opened the huge energy

of Europe into Africa and the Americas. It has been fairly well established that Columbus was descended from Catalan Jews. But whether this be true or no, it is certain that he could never have made his great journey without the maps, the navigation science and the money of Jews, and without the inspiration he derived from the Bible.

Many a dark hour the Jews passed through from about the time of Columbus, but when the modern world again lifted the bars, they again revealed their health by their contributions to modern thought, art and science. Throughout the ages which had buried nations and entire worlds once contemporaries of the Jews, they had persisted in that simple way of life which is their great tradition.

It starts from this knowledge: that life has meaning, and that every man, woman and nation can discover life's meaning—which is, to win the world, under God, through justice, mercy and love, for the brotherhood of man. It is as simple as that. And this, literally, is all the dogma there is to Judaism; all else is commentary. Under this single law the dignity and the joyous destiny of all men become law; individual mercy and social justice become law; democracy becomes the law.

It is a law so exalted that of course humans do not fulfill it; Jews never have fulfilled it. But even in their darkest ghetto days they came close enough to fulfilling it to survive, to keep the light burning and to preserve a health which, once they were released, burst forth into the modern world. To me the survival of the Jews

proves that the law of the Jews must be very close to the law of life. This law, we have seen, is a very simple expression of democracy. Democracy, therefore, is real and must prosper, because it expresses man's real meaning. In other words, the survival of the Jews is a witness of the truth—that by the reality of his nature, man shall strive—forever strive, and, failing, strive again to beat his swords into plowshares, do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God.

The hostility of the fascists and of all anti-democrats for the Jews is therefore not mysterious. But although the Jews were the first "fathers," the first "specialists" of the democratic way of life, it was not directly through them that democracy penetrated Europe and America. It was through Christianity, of course. And under their hate for the Jews, which they dare to express openly because the Jews are a small and helpless people, the Hitlers and Mussolinis attack their true hate, the Christians.

Thousands of Jews may feel that there is "nothing Jewish about them" except a meaningless name. Hitler knows better. The anti-democrat knows that the most unconscious child of so potent a tradition must have some "taint" in him of the democratic ideal. He knows also that he must not reveal the reason of his hatred of the Jews to his people. If he said to them: "Hate the Jews because they taught the democratic way of universal dignity and love, because they are responsible for Christianity," the humblest and most ignorant would turn against him. But Hitler dares not reveal,

even to himself, why he hates the Jews. He, too, is a man; somewhere deep within him he, too, knows the law of universal brotherhood. To deceive the people for his own twisted ends, he must begin by deceiving himself.

## 4

All this throws a very different light on the Jew in America; on the kind of Jew that America can use. The Jews belong here, like all men of all pasts who loyally work and serve. But through their tradition they have a particular stake in America. If that tradition which has formed them actively courses through their veins, they belong deeply in a land whose fathers, from Roger Williams to Abraham Lincoln, were nourished by their fathers.

The American Jew who denies or ignores the validity of this tradition therefore does the contrary of what he supposes: he weakens his claims upon America. I do not mean that such Jews are bad Americans. I have shown, I hope, that the tradition of their fathers, which is the essence of democracy, is too potent to have left them untouched, whether they know it or not.

As a matter of fact, that tradition has simply become secularized in them, in American terms. Something very similar happened to men like Jefferson and Thomas Paine, who were little interested in Christian terms, and yet whose entire vision of democracy was a secularized form of their inherited Christianity. Yet, although it is extremely rare, the truth requires me to

say that Jews who deliberately turn against their roots may go wrong in their loyalty to the democratic way. In the 1920's and 1930's, I met such Jews in the United States—admirers of Mussolini, until the Duce was ordered by his Fuehrer to become an open anti-Semite. As if all Fascist utterances from the beginning had not been anti-democratic, anti-human and against the Jews' tradition!

But if the Jew "only in name" is a safe American, because of the unconscious strength of his tradition and because of his natural inclination for the American way, I deny that he makes the best of leaders. He may be brilliant, he may be loyal. In so far as he ignores the depths of his own soul, he is shallow. And in this crisis we need more than clever men of good will; we need deep men for leaders.

Most emphatically, it is not true that Jews become better Americans as they become less Jewish. The title of Anglo-Saxons to this country goes back to Magna Charta, which they transposed to our shores. The title of the conscious Jew to work and serve our democracy, although he did not find it, is no less clear in age and depth. The conscious Jew can never be misled by honeyed words or by disaster into betraying the democratic way, which is the law of his religion.

Let us never forget that a democratic nation means a symphonic nation, a nation of many voices and many themes, each keeping individuality and freedom, and yet all harmonized together. The man who thinks to benefit our country in its hour of need by wiping out

the loyal differences between us ignores the meaning of democracy, and—whether he knows it or not—is tainted by the false doctrine of our foes. In union there is strength. But union implies diversity, even as strength requires diversity of forms, expressions, functions. The difference of the Jew is in deep harmony with our land. For the Jew's sole special gift through the ages has been his creative loyalty to the kind of life for which we are fighting.

If in our community there are Jews who openly reveal their difference as a peculiar people, let us not fear them. They belong here by an old right and a deep bond. If we run across a Jew—they are getting scarce in the United States—bearded and skullcapped, speaking an outlandish tongue or a crude guttural English, following his antiquated dietary laws and refusing to work or ride on his Saturday Sabbath, we may be sure of an ally in our cause; a veteran ally, an ally so devoted to the brotherhood of man that he has fought for it, often alone, perhaps shrunken and narrowed by the fierceness of his struggle, but ever uncorrupted, through a hundred bloody scourges like Hitler's.

1942



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## II: TOWARD AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF THE JEW

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## TOWARD AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF THE JEW

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IN THIS brief essay, with its enormous subject, I shall have to start from a certain group of assumptions. Here they are:

1. There is no eternal race, even as there is no eternal individual.
2. It is quite conceivable that the Jews, as a racial organism, are decadent and doomed.
  - (a) Even if we admit the value of contemporary Jewish men of genius; even if we appreciate the widespread work of Jewish men of talent in the tissues of contemporary life; even if we establish that all these leaders without exception are products of Jewish culture—we have by no means proven that they themselves are creating or promulgating a future Jewish culture. It might well be that these men, for all their Jewish roots, are the producers of a seed nourished on alien soil and sun and water, and not to be Jewish at all.
3. On the other hand, it is quite conceivable that the Jews as a racial organism have a long history and a great role still before them.
4. The term "Jewish race," as well as the term "Jewish faith," implies a formative, inherent spiritual Idea.

Albert Cohen's fine phrase, "The Jews are an Idea made flesh," probably might be referred to many races: most certainly it is accurate for the Jews. They have survived through the ages because of an inner Form—a spiritual, a cultural, a religious Form. Their constant activity as a racial organism has been to translate—substantiate—this inner Form (their Idea) into an outer Form (their way of living). The history of Torah, Nebi'im, Talmud, Rabbinic Lore, Responsa, etc., is the history of the success of this substantiating act: whereby an Idea kept on becoming flesh, whereby a race kept on living.

5. Therefore, in essence, the problem of the Jew is the problem of an Idea.

(a) It is not in essence a humanitarian or political problem.

(b) It is not the problem of the biological survival, or of the physical and social comfort, of the millions of men and women who now call themselves Jews and who may well tomorrow merge with other races, as have millions of their collateral forebears in ages past.

(c) It is a spiritual or cultural or religious problem. It is, indeed, all of these, since all of these are one. For what culture can enlist the mind of men without touching religion? what religion of men is real which does not pervade their culture? what spiritual activity is worthy of the name, which does not express itself in culture and religion? The problem of the Jew is then a problem of biological creatures differentiated from

others, spiritually, culturally, religiously, by an Idea specified as Jewish.

6. By this Idea specified as Jewish I emphatically do not mean the mere tradition or memory or instinctive and emotional echo of such an Idea: I do not mean that whole cloud of inertia—egotism, sentimentalism, family-attachment, will-to-believe, compensation for social inferiority—which goes by the name of Idea in most muddled minds. You can test the true Idea, as distinct from the “ghost of an Idea,” by its ability to substantiate itself in act and life. You can therefore conclude that where the substantiation does not exist at all, something has happened to the Idea.

7. Therefore, I take the Problem of the Jew to be:

(a) The ascertainment, in actual terms of thought and act, of what it is to be a Jew;

(b) The discovery, in these re-established terms, of whether the Jew *really* wills to survive in the modern world, *can* survive in the modern world, has a function in the modern world: and if so, what that function has become and how he may move to perform it.

Now I do not mean by these assumptions to imply that in the living past every member of the Jewish race was an active thinker and a thinking actor of the Idea called Jewish. As now—and as with all human races—the mass of Jews was ever a fumbling, weak-minded, will-less lot, moved by exterior suggestions of the herd and by internal secretions of the body. But the Jews were a folk wondrously directed and unified by a *lead-*

ership in which the Jewish Idea was cogent. This is the Jews' distinction. Other races had spiritual leaders: the Jews accepted theirs. Other races had prophets: the Jews lived by theirs. The Jewish mass became the whole and holy substantiation in life of the Jewish Idea. The Jewish mass is doubtless as good material as ever. What it lacks is leaders. And without leaders any human mass is like the chaotic self-living cells of a body without a brain.

This brings me to a second string of assumptions, also thresholding what will be my thesis: which thesis also will be the merest threshold:

1. The Jewish Idea was proven valid, because it was *lived*: it was lived day by day, year by year, age by age, by the Jewish people. To say that this was less than heroic, when the Jews crouched distracted under the hostile worlds of medieval Europe, is to reveal a frivolous disregard for history. (I am not sure that the apex of Jewish greatness is not closer in time to Rashi than to Isaiah.) Yet this *living* of their Idea was possible because no truth in Europe could destroy it. The bases of the Jewish faith were not undermined by the science, the history, the philosophy, or the religions of that day. In science, psychology, metaphysics, logic, historic critical method, there was a fundamental unity nourishing Judaism, Catholicism, and Islam alike. This unity underlay the branching disparities between them, and supported them all. This unity has broken. Wherefore, they all are breaking. It is a fallacy to explain by industrialism the discrepancy of so many Jews from a

Jewish life. Is the machine more hostile to the Jew than was the medieval knight? If Jewish life is weakening, it is because the Idea of the Jew is stricken. If the Jews are less heroic than they were, it is because they no longer know why they should be heroic: it is because they no longer know why, actually, they are Jews. Whether the Idea of the Jew is stricken fatally and forever, or is in mere transition to a new substantiation, we shall not know until we *do* know what this Idea is.

2. The Jewish folk today is sick. If you would verify this in your own experience, remember that health in its lowest sense means physical and functional unity of the body, means harmony and wholeness of all its parts. Wholeness and health are one: the healthy body is that which works as a whole. Remember that social and spiritual health implies a like harmony and wholeness (*not uniformity*) in social, spiritual life. And now look at your own world. What harmony is there between you and your children, beyond the lowest bonds of carnal affection? what harmony in ideals, in religion, in thought, in pleasures? what harmony is there between the commands of your faith and the facts of your everyday life? between your mood on the Day of Atonement and on a day of business? between your amusements and your inherited arts? between your pleasures and your duties? What unity is there between your Rabbi reading the Torah and the Prophets, and your Synagogue comfortably settled on the basis of the individual "success" of its supporters? Then answer for

yourself: Is this fundamental disunity and disintegration within Jewish life health—or ill-health?—or is it possibly death? The Jewish folk shares its disease with other spiritual and cultural bodies: a disease due to the dislocation of the values upon which, uninterruptedly for thousands of years, the Occident has builded.

3. The contemporary American Synagogue is failing in its function as leader and healer of the Jewish folk. There are in the Rabbinate men of high intellectual and moral will. Despite them, the Synagogue fails, because it works by a method no longer valid: it assumes that the bases of the Jewish Idea are intact and that the task of Jewish leadership is still merely to interpret and substantiate the Idea to the folk. But the Idea is no longer sound; very simply because, in terms of modern thought and law and history and science, it is no longer recognized or recognizable.

4. If the Synagogue permanently fails, the Jewish race is doomed. By Synagogue I mean a focus for divine service by the Jews. By divine service I mean a life lived according to a religious ideal. Such a life needs a hearth for its communal expressions in thought and art. Vital Judaism will never outlive the need of what the Synagogue should be. Nor do I find a reason why the word Synagogue, with its heroic inheritance, should be discarded. It is a good word. So is God a good word: an infinitely better word than Deity, Life-force, Divine Principle and the rest of the “modern” (really eighteenth century) jargons.

5. It is shameful for a man to identify himself with

an Idea or spiritual Form, simply because he was born into a word-association with it. We must accept our physical inheritance. We can't help being born brown-eyed or American or French. But to be a Methodist or a Republican or an Anarchist, because I was born one, is shameful. To be a Jew *merely* because I was born one is equally shameful. This is true because by our previous propositions it is clear that the term Jew, with its ideal and spiritual essence extracted, becomes a valueless expression.

6. The Jew who is a Jew because he cannot help it, or because he is descended from Jews, or because he is proud of being a Jew (the pride, of course, being as a rule no more than compensation for his wounded ego), I call the *inertial* Jew. Without an organizing active Jewish leadership, the *inertial* Jews constitute a body without a head. They swarm: eventually they disintegrate and stink. As Jews they cannot be said to live.

(a) The *inertial* Jew, in this state, is a greater menace to the Jews as a race than the Jew who joins the Episcopal Church. For if the Jews be deemed an organism, the poisons or dead matter which the organism excretes and discharges are less dangerous than those which remain within the system.

7. Throughout this essay I confine myself to the three million men and women living in the United States and calling themselves Jews. I am aware that in East Europe and in Africa there are whole communi-

ties of Jews in whom the classic Idea of the Jew is valid still, who have leadership, who are hence organically living. The reason for this is that such Jews still breathe a medieval atmosphere. No law or idea has reached them yet to undermine the laws and facts basic to their culture. It is of course only a matter of time before this medieval atmosphere recedes from such last hinterlands. Then, with the invasion of hostile ideas, these surviving Jewish bodies will decompose, as are decomposing the bodies of Jews in Germany, France, England, and the United States.

## 2

And now I may begin. We have our Jewish problem. It regards, I must repeat, essentially no such matter as prejudice, charity, or the farms of Zion. These are all human problems and with honor. Of course, it is well that Jews be not barred from social institutions (nor Negroes, either). Of course, it is well that Jews have food and liberty in Poland (like the oppressed and poor in every land). Of course, if Jews desire to go to Palestine, they should go there (perhaps some of the Negroes would like to go to Africa). The problem of the Jew cuts under these considerations. It is the problem of the Idea, without which there might indeed be men and women to feed in Poland or to farm in Zion—but no Jews at all! For if the Idea which makes the Jew is permitted to die, clearly the Jew will go.

A problem cannot be solved until it is known. It

cannot be known until it is analyzed. Therefore, the problem of the Jew requires analysis.

*Now, you cannot analyze anything just by saying that you want to.* I should like to print these twelve words in headlines as large as those announcing the day's scandal in the *Daily News*. They are at least as important.

Tell a child to analyze anything. Will he do so? He can't. He lacks a method. Tell a sick man, a sick race, a sick world to analyze their disease. They can't. For all their good will-to-survive, they may die. Unless they have a method. There can be no analysis without a method, even as there can be no creation without a technique. It won't suffice for eloquent Rabbis to exhort their flock to live like Jews when the flock has lost its working knowledge of what it is, in a work-a-day world, to be Jewish. It won't suffice for magazines and committees to exhort their intellectual staffs to analyze the nature of the problem of the Jew, unless they have a valid analytic method. The will to analyze is usually as childish and as futile as the will to eat the moon.

Before there can be analysis, there must be method. And before there can be method, there must be the rejection of all invalid methods.

One trait, almost universal, invalidates any method of analysis. It is the trait of subjectivity. You cannot even approach a method for analyzing X without at the very first thinking and acting as if you were not X. You must be objective ere you can hope to analyze: whether your inquiry be upon a molecule or your own

human soul. The Jew must at the outset become objective about the problem of the Jew.

What are the facts of Jewish inquiry today? A vast vapor of assumptions they are, all more or less openly derived from wish-fulfillment, identification between the inquirer and the object: subjectivity full-blast and often lyrically lovely—subjectivity which is the *nefas* of knowledge. This vice in our “professional Jews” is patent. Does it not rot the splendid powers of such men as Ludwig Lewisohn?

“We are a people of reason and of peace,” says Dr. Lewisohn. “We are a people of reason and of peace,” he might hear an Athenian bootblack tell him. “Prove it!” answers Dr. Lewisohn. The bootblack replies: “Aristotle, Socrates, Plato.” “You are identifying yourself, perhaps falsely, with an heroic past,” might be Dr. Lewisohn’s response. “What of today?” . . . So, similarly, might the bootblack from Athens reply to Dr. Lewisohn bound for Zion. “Prove it! The Jews whose shoes I shine on Sixth Avenue and 14th Street, New York, A.D. 1926, seem otherwise to me. The Quakers are a people of peace. Yesterday—not a thousand years ago—they proved it by declining to fight. Were the Jews a people of peace in 1914? Are they a people of reason who support the insane misery of our social system (and profit by it)? I seem to have heard, in the late war, of a Rabbi who drove rivets in a naval shipyard. Was that Rabbi a Jew? How many Rabbis went to jail for obstructing the Draft?”

“That is all nonsense, of course,” says the nationalist

Jew. "We are not a bit better—more reasonable, more peaceful—than other nations. But we *are* a nation. Therefore, we need a national home." But here, no less, right or wrong, is the same muddle of assumptions. If the Jews are a nation, they have been one for two thousand years precisely without a national home. Why then, of a sudden, do they need one? And if they are not a nation, where is the nationalist Jew?

Perhaps the Jews need a national home: perhaps the claims of the apologists are good. You have no right to agree with them, however true, until you have found out for yourself if they are possibly false. Unless your agreement has behind it the body of a true conviction, it will be mere rhetoric, mere minor poetry: it will accomplish nothing. Before you *conclude* so comfortably according to your own sweet sense, you'd better *begin*: and you cannot even begin to find a method for a just conclusion to your problem until you have first learned to detach yourself from it.

Underlying almost all so-called analysis of the present problem of the present Jew, I find this taint of subjectivity: self-defensive, self-soothing, self-deceptive. Indeed, the detachment whereby alone analysis and creation become possible is heroically hard to achieve. It is perhaps harder and more heroic today when the Jews live interspersed through a vast social body than was the self-detachment of the medieval Jew from the hostile world in which he lived apart. Being already separate in so much from his neighbor, the earlier Jew had a psychologic precedent for examining himself as

if he were another. In our mob world, this self-detachment is a moral victory, requiring a moral power beyond most humans. Therefore, at the very limen of an approach to knowledge about the Jew, we have a matter of morals, a matter of spiritual courage.

I recall a lunch I once attended at which were present many eminent Americans professing to be Jews, to do honor to Israel Zangwill. Much of the talk was devoted to bewailing the prejudice against Jews in the modern Western world.

"Why, oh, why," ran the burden of the talk, "do they discriminate against us?"

Why, indeed? The Jew of medieval Europe asked no such question. He knew why he was spat upon, gouged, and murdered. There was a reason, a holy reason, and he accepted it. He organized no luncheons to whine about discrimination. The pity is that there is so little reason for discrimination against the "modern" Jew. "Why, oh, why, indeed?" He believes in God as little as the others: he bothers as little about God's commandments. He gouges, cheats, oppresses, murders with the best of the Christians. Who, at that sad luncheon, "honoring Mr. Zangwill," saw the pitiful irony of the modern Jew's complaint that there be prejudice against him?

I say that the Jew had best give up worrying so pleasantly, so self-soothingly, about Prejudice, Pogroms, Poverty, and Palestine. Let him, of course, raise his millions for Poland—and lay unto his soul no lying unction that he has thereby acted better than the

merest humble human, rescuing his brother. Let him colonize Palestine—and save his self-praise for essential matters. If he is not willing to suffer, willing to be poor, willing to be alone, as once he suffered and was poor and alone, he is not even a candidate for that self-knowledge whereby only he may bring value once again to the word Jew.

I say that until there are groups of Jews eager to bear the burden and the brunt of being Jewish and to do without the compensations which the Jewish apologists and patriots afford them; willing to say, "Yes, call me a Jew and do not dream that I claim thereby respect, love, or consideration beyond what my own personal act demands. Call me Jew, and indeed deride and despise me for my impertinent bearing of an ancient name, unless my life in every act justify the distinction in its whole adherence to the Jewish spirit. And know, that if—being in life a veritable Jew—I thereby win your persecution, still my thought will go, not to avoiding, but to deserving your hatred":—until there are groups of Jews like this, there is no chance for a true Jewish revival functioning in the modern world as the Jews did function in the ancient and in the medieval.

Give us such a community of Jews—however scattered and however small—and you have the material for a working method whereby the Jew may once more be himself and come clean to his future course: either to know that his function in the world of God is over and so to disappear, or, knowing it alive, to live his part, heroically, wholly, as he has in the past.

## 3

We have, then, this mass of American Jews, holding to their Jewishness for reasons traditional and passive: *inertial Jews*: cells, not dead but without unifying principle to make them really live. Among this folk there is no leadership; there is, however, a minority intelligent and active, who feel that Jewishness still has worth in the world, and who have the will (if only there were the way) to give themselves to prove it. This minority, often desperate, skeptical, self-destructive (as is all undirected power), is the hope on which I lean. For it is the material for the working-out of a method of self-knowledge . . .

This minority of *willing Jews* shall constitute itself a spiritual community of a sort not known in the United States: it shall make of itself both the material and the eye for self-analysis. In order to do this, it must give up self-praise, self-defense, self-contempt. These are all subjective acts; and it must be objective. These are all subtly disguised self-love—like self-love, sterile; and it must be creative. This community, made up of seemingly isolated men and women living at large in the world, must be prepared to do something far more arduous and heroic: it must be prepared to devote itself to finding out what it really thinks, what it really desires, what it does, what it is.

How shall it go about this? Fortunately there is a way at hand. The work of the creative mind is the

articulate substance of the social body. The work of art is the essential word of the social body. This community of willing Jews shall therefore set out to observe itself, by preserving, encouraging, and studying the work of its creators. (By creator I mean not alone the artist, the poet, but as well the true critic, the true scholar, the pure scientist, the man devoted to thinking for the sake of knowledge, not of acquisition.) Clearly, our community will not be able to observe this creator until it finds him. And it won't find him (or keep him) unless it protects him. It will have to defend him from the environing chaos. It will have to help him to be himself—to achieve himself and his work, purely. It will have to look on this work as sacred, even as was the work of the priest, the thinker, and the artist in holier days. If it does this, the community will, in cultivating pure thought and pure creation, perform a sacrament which will ennable itself. And in knowing the work of pure thought and pure creation, it will be knowing itself, experiencing itself, enriching itself, coming indeed into life.

Now, although this method is certainly feasible in respect of economics, the community that shall practice it must at the beginning overcome certain moral and intellectual falsities current today. It must expect no "results"—for only so will it be able to achieve the one result which counts: true creation and true self-knowledge. It must maternally protect the creator with an instinct at least equal to that of the dumb brute which protects its young (the fulfillers of its life) or

lays its eggs in not too hostile places; or of the gardener who safeguards the tree and plant which he expects to bear. And it must make *no demand* on these creators, beyond this: that they find and then give forth their truth.

Above all, the community must not demand—since it is consciously Jewish—that the creator's work be consciously Jewish. Here we come upon a fallacy from which even the most enlightened Jewish institutions are not free. There seems to be a notion that to be Jewish, and of value to the Jews, Jewish art must deal with Jewish subjects. The converse is more likely to be true. Was Racine less French and of less value to the French because he wrote on Greek and Hebrew subjects? Was Shakespeare atypical from the English when he imagined a Danish *Hamlet* and a Moorish *Othello*? But there is here an even deeper issue.

Our premise is that the classic forms of Jewish life, as they survive today in custom and in manner, are decadent. They are decadent because the Idea underneath them and nourishing them has been withdrawn from them. The imitative Jewish artist, he who is satisfied only with surfaces and effects, may be precisely the one to employ these forms for subjects. The community which looks for Jewish art with Jewish subjects will probably be exiling the very matter from which, alone, it can be nourished and can achieve self-knowledge. For the true creator begins by rejecting decadent forms, by refusing old names and labels. With his own primordial spirit he will synthesize the chaos

of the world about him into forms newly created, newly valid. And if he be a Jew, and if the term Jew still has a meaning, *his* synthesis, unlabeled, will be the actually Jewish. If you want an instance, take the *Ethics* of Spinoza. It was written in Latin and by a man discarded by the Jewish Church. It is, nonetheless, so far as I know, the chief esthetic work of that age worthy to have been assimilated by a self-conscious Jewish community as Jewish art. And yet the *Ethics* of Spinoza with its deeply Jewish spirit could never have been written if the man had not been intellectually detached from the limitations of a Jewish past and of a Jewish "subject."

A large portion of the creative work, inspired and supported by this ideal community of ours, will of course be nominally Jewish: it will deal perhaps with Jewish history and tradition, with the psychology of the Jews. But the deepest of that work, insofar as it is truly creative, not merely traditional, may not have the traditional Jewish mark upon it. It will be made Jewish, as was the creative work of the Prophets, when the Jewish community digests it.

This ideal community of ours will find itself creative. It will nourish the creator and be nourished by him. It will objectively observe itself in the creator's work: the creator will objectively experience himself in the responses of his audience. And so, each of them, through their objectivity, will subjectively grow greater. The community will let the creator be himself: but not through proneness or indifference. Say rather, through

an immense and passionate concern with the results: since it will know that only by keeping its hands off, by reserving judgment, by refraining from traditional defense or attack, will it eventually achieve, once more, an Idea worth defending, worth living.

This method of self-search, of self-analysis, will as its first fruit bear the joyous birth of a new Jewish body: a body of Jews bound together not only by a past but by a future: a body of Jews unified not in desperately holding what once it had created, but in creating what will be worth holding. This, in itself, is divine service. This mood alone, making a community of men, would make them holy.

But there will be far more. The act of self-discovery brings with it the awareness of beauty. Why else, in all ages, have the wise men said: "Know thyself!" "As above, so below!" "God has created man in His own Image"? It happens to be true. To see beauty is but to see *wholly*. If a man knows himself he will know God: and he will dwell in beauty.

Thus, in the end, this method of communal self-analysis will be not analysis at all; it will be creation. If a thousand Jews bound themselves together into a spiritual body through this heroic temper of self-search, the problem of the Jew—of the spiritual survival of the Jew—might be already solved. For such a group of men would generate a power so rare and high that it would light the world.

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### III: WITH MARX, SPINOZA

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## WITH MARX, SPINOZA

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THIS chapter would not have been written at this hour had it not been for the dark hour of the German Jews.\* But their catastrophe is the deepening, within the crisis of the world, of a threat that for two centuries has gathered against Jewry. Judaism has never solved the challenge of the modern world; and this challenge is now a crisis—one of those historic crises from which Jewry must be reborn, if at all, through the threshold of death.

I do not stop to swell the lamentations that the fate

\* The date was of Hitler's accession to power. Although the writer saw "the catastrophe deepening" and that "as the capitalistic era shrinks, darkens, and despairs" the fate of the Jew "will grow worse" (see the last paragraph of this essay), he dared not envision the wholesale butchery of the Jews which, within the decade, followed. To have known this would have meant to banish the still possible hope that the corrupted Democracies: France, Great Britain, the United States, might yet reclaim the sanity of their tradition, and collaborate with the eager Soviet Union before it was too late, against the demonic march of Hitler. It would have meant to know more precisely than any of us dared to know, in 1933, the *advanced* stage of our own decay—French, British, American—which alone empowered the Fascists to murder Spain's Republic and to prepare the world for war. This essay must be read in the perspective of that "still possible hope." The subsequent wholesale massacre of the Jews places their plight in a different category from the oppression which they then still shared with other minorities: Christians and communists, for instance. Nevertheless the basic judgment of this essay must stand. The blood and tears of the martyred Jewish millions must not, lest the living die, obscure it.

of half a million highly cultured Jews has aroused in all sane people. My object is more stern. It is to analyze the response of the Jews in the United States to Hitler: to expose and study from the response certain traits of modern Jewry. There has been, in all the tears and rage, one constant refrain. "Why are we persecuted?" cry the leaders. "We are not different from you gentiles—not in any point of thought, conduct, or allegiance, that counts. In Germany, we are good Germans; in America, we are good Americans. There is no reason for this persecution."

Now, Jews have often suffered persecution; although, I suspect, never by such ruthlessly efficient methods as the German. But Jews have always known why they were maltreated. It was because they were different; in thought, in conduct, in allegiance, a peculiar people. It was because they were Jews. This might cause great sacrifice. But since Jewishness was the treasure of their lives, source of their beauty and joy, they deemed even the price of persecution not too great to pay for being Jewish. They took the persecution for granted, meeting it as shrewdly as they could. The stress of their energy and will was focused, not on avoiding or denying reasons for persecution, but on being Jews. Here, then, is an enormous difference. For the first time in a history of three thousand years, the leaders of Jewry do not know why they are persecuted: for the first time they disclaim any reason for persecution.

This sheds new light on the German Jewish disaster.

Are these half million victims to be considered undifferentiably as suffering human beings? Then they deserve no more pity and help—no more and, of course, no less—than the millions of other sufferers of our dark age: than the Negroes of our South, for instance; than the countless families broken by unemployment; than the communists whom Hitler and the Balkan sadists are torturing and maiming. But such pooled pity does not satisfy the Jewish leaders. In their appeals and reports they are careful to separate their cause from others. They imply that German Jewry calls for more than its quantitative share of the concern of a world riven with anguish; they assume, indeed, that a great people, whose value to mankind is high, is being menaced. Now this claim, on the evidence of the past, can be denied by no intelligent man. The Jews have through the centuries made contributions to the Western world that are inestimable, and organic. But are not the contemporary leaders confused in time? Should the Jews be saved today for what they were in the past? Such a plea runs counter to all natural law. What is there *alive* in contemporary Jewry to distinguish it from any other quantitative group of human beings?

The answer, alas! is, there is nothing. There are still, it is true, traditional Jewish communes in East Europe and North Africa. But we do not hear from them; they provide no Jewish leaders. Indeed, the modern world no longer gives them nurture or function, and they are doomed by their own archaic form. The Jewry that cries out against Hitlerism and is menaced by it in

the West, and that assumes its past worth as argument for its present survival, is a "progressive" Jewry, freed from that past. It is the Jewry that cries: Why are we persecuted? Let us examine it, then, for Jewishness—and in its most prosperous member, the Jews of the United States.

To be a Jew has always meant to live *a certain way of life*: a way which, evolving with the ages and with the cultural-economic conditions of the lands, was yet an organic growth from a single tradition. This tradition was one; and the Jewish groups made it organic with their lives. Other nations had prophets, the Jews enacted theirs. Other nations had arts, the Jews lived theirs. Other peoples had high standards for personal, communal, and cosmic relations: the Jews, by the minutiae of their 613 commandments, made flesh and bone of their vision of the divine and the eternal. The defining Jewish trait is unification of values, personal and communal, into an organic body of behavior. The defining Jewish term is action.

The Jewish principle—unity of value and deed, harmony of person and group—has always had a dual form. That the values of the person shall be fulfilled in the community, there must be *social justice*. And that within the cosmos there shall be preserved and furthered the values of men and of Man, there must be *God*. Social justice, of course, was an aspiration limited by the economy of the particular land and era—limited, that is, by *possibility*. What did God mean to the Jew? At first by miracle and confusedly, then rationally, God

meant the dynamic immanence, in the world of matter and of man, of what the person most deeply recognized as his own truth and worth. God meant the principle of order, the will to unity, in an otherwise chaotic multiverse. God meant *value in Being*. The Jews, as a people, were the first to understand that this value-in-Being could not be abstract, not diffuse, not impersonal, although it transcended individuals; that it was myriadly focused and fleshed in human lives. This means that for the Jew every man and woman holds a purposive and creative place in life's dynamic process.

Now, bearing this definition in mind, where—outside the vanishing Old World ghettos of our East Side—are the Jews? Where in New York, in Cincinnati, in Chicago, in San Francisco? The American Jew is as divided in his ideals and his behavior as any gentile. His amusements and his arts, his family life and his business methods, his loyalties to class, state, and God, are the same tissue of contradictions. Like any gentile, he scrambles for the dollar, lives for his belly, shares in the stampede for cheap delights. As businessman, he also exploits his brother; as citizen, he votes for the same liars, crude or gilded. He shouts the same chauvinistic phrases and is ready, with the rest, in time of war, to rush with the courage of Gadarene swine to his destruction. He enjoys (and writes) the same inane novels, movies. In a society whose crucial trait is the abyss between ideal and deed, he—the Jew—is indistinguishable from his neighbor. Is the “Jewishness” of these modern Jews a dynamic pattern of action? or is

it a mere moldering heap of sentiment, vanity, and habit?

I am speaking of the prosperous American Jew; not yet of the rank and file, the humble clerks and clothing workers, artisans and mechanics. These, as Jews, are passive. And in so far as they have Jewish leaders to make them act (as contradistinguished from labor leaders, for example), they choose the very type who have grown great by shrewd collaboration with a world that is the antithesis, in every value, to what is Jewish. This is a cardinal point in the lethal condition of American Jewry. Its leaders and spokesmen, in their loyalty to the exploiting class, have dangerously identified the Jew with a bourgeoisie that is degenerate and doomed.

In the Middle Ages, the Jew was allied functionally with the rising burgher class whose destiny it was to break the feudal system. This alliance was one reason for the Jew's survival. But burgherdom, in medieval Europe, played a different moral part from the *grande bourgeoisie* of today. In the realm of practicable action, the burgherdom stood for social justice and intellectual freedom, as against the exploiting landowning gentry and the landowning church. Technically, the profit system always meant exploitation of labor. But socially, this early bourgeois exploitation was in the direction of justice, since it was a departure from slavery and spread the margin of leisure whereby man's culture could alone advance. Until the invention of the machine, some exploitation of men was needed in order that a privileged portion of mankind could think—and

at last, by perfecting the machine, and spreading possible leisure to all humanity, abolish the need of human exploitation. The alliance of medieval Jewry with burgherdom was therefore within the rhythm of advancing social justice, and hence harmonious with Jewishness. But today, the dominant bourgeoisie is the power of stratified social injustice: it is the power of war, of spiritual death and intellectual ruin.

The intensity of American Jewish allegiance to the exploiting class can be measured by the lives of the prominent Jewish leaders.

Almost without exception they are lawyers, judges, merchants, bankers, proprietors of newspapers and other vast affairs; men who have grown great in the American game of grab; men indistinguishable in spirit, mind and action, from thousands of other divided men who (with like shamelessness) call themselves Christian. In a few instances, they are writers and Rabbis—apologists, rank or subtle, of the exploiting classes.

Since their deeds are contradictions of their ideals, are such leaders Jews? Is a folk that such men lead, a Jewish folk? From the Jewish premise that value and vision must become action, a trait of Jewry has ever been to create true Jewish leaders.

But it may be said, there are other Jews, greater than these: not necessarily American, yet the real leaders of Jewry. There are Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Bergson, Leon Trotsky . . . others. These men are great, and are leaders, and are Jews. But they are not leaders of Jews. They are leaders

of scientists, philosophers, artists, revolutionists. They and other great Jewish men of our times are products of Jewish life; but modern Jewry cannot claim them. They are the offspring of the old communal Jewry which still existed in their formative years. And the fact that they have been forced to function quite outside modern Israel is another proof of its present dissolution. The Jewish world no longer holds its men of genius; the highest products of its spirit, of its intellectual discipline and of its sense of life, leave the parent body. And the world of Jews, in deadly division from the Jewish spirit, chooses leaders who deepen its disease.

Consider now the pitiful, the ironical condition of the Jew. To suffer for a cause that our soul loves is bearable: is, indeed—since we must suffer—man's most enviable destiny. But to suffer for nothing! To be hated and ruined as a Jew, when one's life is not Jewish! The Jews of Germany, taken as a whole, exist *inertially* because their past way was Jewish and because it takes more than a generation to destroy a way of life so strong and so vital. If two hundred years ago, they had ceased living as Jews, Hitler and the Nazis, who are ignorant men, would probably not have heard of them. Hitler persecutes them now because as a German in revolt against Western civilization, he has inherited confusedly, a legitimate hatred of the Jews who had so much to do with that civilization's creating.

But that is only half the picture. The Jews are allied with an agonizing and desperate middle class. When

that class flourished, the Jews, functioning in it, were tolerated by it. Now that it droops and its spoils dwindle, it turns—like a threatened beast—against its weaker neighbor. This is the principle of “every man for himself”—the basic law of bourgeois life. Oh, the ironical confusion in the fate of the modern Jew! He is persecuted by barbarous and desperate men because of ideals that he no longer lives: and he is persecuted by a class to which, in the main, he is loyal, because he is a rival of its barbarous way of life—a way that contradicts his own ideals!

This is Germany today: who doubts that with variations it may be America tomorrow? that it may be any capitalistic country where the Jew, *in his present*, is a minority factor in a desperate middle class and *in his past* a reminder of the liberal culture of the Western world, against which that desperate class is in revolt?

## 2

How can the Jew survive in the modern world, and why should he survive? To answer clearly, I must first state some of the reasons why he survived in the past. And since the kaleidoscope of Jewish generations is so great, I take the latest period of undisputed Jewish health: the Middle Ages (which lasted for the Jews until the eighteenth century), when Israel lived, harmonious and whole, within a Europe of violent divisions, and often savagely hostile.

1. Jewry's strict unity of ideal and conduct made the

community, although small and surrounded, an efficient body. All its energy was conserved for itself and applied functionally for survival; whereas in a greater community where value and deed are divided, there is conflict, loss of energy, disease.

2. In Judaism, both ideally and actively, there was no separation between man and group. Although infiltrations from Alexandrian Egypt and Persia corrupted the ancient Hebrew knowledge that there is no individual immortality, this superstition of a surviving individual soul (a deep cause of the failure of European cultures) was never strong against the healthy Jewish unification of person and commune. Therefore, medieval Jewry had no destructive egoism—no “great men”—to mislead it for discordant individualistic ends. (The egoistic leader battens on the accumulated egoisms of his rabble.) In Jewry, the leaders were as organic to the commune as an eye or a brain to the body. These leaders were not soldiers, not megalomaniacs of fame and money: they were the seers and the thinkers. Here, then, was a social body whose eyes and brain literally led it—in contrast to our modern world in which the eye and the brain often appear to be discards or decorations.

3. Israel had, despite theological and cultural differences, a deep community of values with Christian cultural leaders. These recognized the worth of the Jewish ethic; the beauty of the Jews’ concept of God-head as immanent in human action. The best in Christian Europe at all times respected, and often learned

from, the "hated" Jews. And during the ages when the Church was strong, it had enough influence to defend the Jews against extremities of persecution.

4. Throughout these times, Jewry had an economic function. Its activities in international commerce, banking, exchange, and in the practical sciences of communication and of navigation, did a necessary work in feudal Europe. And this allied Israel with the struggling middle class—the burghers who were to inherit and transform feudal Europe. Without this function and the alliance with a rising economic class, Jewry's inner harmony of action could not have saved it. For there would have been lacking a harmony of function within the larger body of the gentile world.

### 3

To return, now, to our day; the Jew obviously can survive, if the immutable essence of the Jewish social organism can somehow be transformed to function in the modern world. And obviously, the Jew should survive, if this essential Jewish nature still has a part to play before mankind. These questions are the subject for a book—which I shall write, if I live long enough. Here, I can but sketch my answer.

The Jewish principle of value-in-Being, of God and social justice, of the *enactment* of value by individual and group, did not exist *in vacuo*. It existed within a matrix. And this matrix was the agrarian economic-cultural world—a world so basally static that the eight-

eenth-century Galician Jew shared it, fundamentally unchanged, with Amos and Isaiah. So long as the matrix held, the Jew could follow the commandments of his prophets *as interpreted by twenty centuries of fathers.*

We may now see why the Jewish organism broke in the impact with the modern world. Modern industrialism destroyed the simple, paternalistic economy under which the Jewish commune *approximated* social justice. And modern thought and science corroded the theologic-ethic form under which the Jew knew God. To survive, the Jewish principle must be transfigured into modern terms. Judaism must embrace an again workable program moving toward social justice: and that means the unequivocal destruction of the unjust anarchy called industrial capitalism. And Judaism must redefine what it has always meant by God.

Now, let the reader answer: Is the principle of social justice needed today? And that Man may live, must there be, not an anthill system, but a living social form that nurtures the inward need of every human being to create and to share his inward vision and value? If your answer is Yes, then there is need in the world of what has been, for nearly thirty hundred years, the Jewish principle. And as if history urged that this cardinal dual need of the world might yet be the peculiar business of the Jewish people (there have always been, in all nations, saintly and isolated men who lived and died for it, as greatly as any Jew), the need stands

most forcibly answered in the work of two Jews—Jews of a “new remnant,” Marx and Spinoza.

I place Marx first, because in the perspective of function he comes first—although Spinoza lived two centuries before him and profoundly influenced his thinking. Marx, from the Jewish premise of history as an organism evolving toward “good,” has given to the industrial world a realistic logic and a technique of social justice. Time, of course, has amended or refuted many details of his plan; yet it is nonetheless categorical that every man who wants to *enact* social justice in the modern world must be a Marxist in spirit although he may reject certain Marxist dogmas. The modern Jew, if he is to exist, must interpret Marx as a prophet as surely as his forebears interpreted Moses and Isaiah. Marx (despite chronology) comes before Spinoza, because the social discord is a disease immediately threatening the survival of civilized mankind; and because collective consciousness comes before mature self-consciousness. Marx without Spinoza suggests an imperative, immediate, primitive, first step in social action. Spinoza, without Marx, remains an abstract philosophy, or a personal ethic as impotent in our modern chaos as was Stoicism in the late Roman world.

But as Marx is the man who most surely projected the prophetic aspiration of social justice into a cogent modern program, Spinoza is the prophet who completed the purifying of the knowledge of God into the God of inwardness, of substance and of action. If Marx

carries on Moses and Ezra, Spinoza carries on Isaiah and Jesus. It is he who has best established the organic being of God in matter and in human thought; who has made rational the ancient mystic intuition that the cosmos dwells within the man in so far as the man grows self-conscious. By giving divine value to matter, in a form acceptable to the age of science, Spinoza brings the organic dimension of life to the work of Marx, who lifted into action a program of social justice in the age of machines.

Now, it may be that Spinoza and Marx are the swan song of Israel: the final message of a great people before its ultimate death. It may be that the work of unifying and enacting their contributions shall fall to other peoples. There is a Soviet Union in the world, and China, and the two Americas; from such virgin soil may rise the future flowering of the Prophets. I do not know. But I do know that, if the Jew is to survive as an organic group, he must enact his modern prophets as his fathers (after rejecting them, also) enacted the prophets of Scripture. And I conclude by broadly sketching what the modern Jewish way of living must be.

## 4

To begin with (for, I repeat—in the field of action, Marx comes before Spinoza), the Jew must renounce loyalty to the exploiting class. Without that, all his “service” is a “vain oblation.” Today, as twenty-six centuries ago, the word of the Prophet is true:

*Bring no more vain oblations;  
It is an offering of abomination unto Me;  
New moon and sabbath, the holding of con-  
vocations—  
I cannot endure iniquity along with solemn  
assembly. . . .  
Cease to do evil;  
Learn to do well;  
Seek justice. . . .*

“Learn to do well!” In our industrial world, this is not simple—far less simple than it was in the world of Isaiah and Jesus. It means, however, in even its simplest present form, active allegiance to the class whose historic function it is to abolish economic exploitation—the base of social injustice and of war—by doing away with economic classes altogether. This new allegiance will not be easy; since the Jews for centuries have been forced to earn their bread within the middle class, it will have the value, by itself, of a religious conversion. But this new loyalty as a group does not mean that the Jew will be submerged in the working class or in any proletarian body like the communists. He must fight for the workers (*and the farmer and the intellectual, too, are workers*), help them with his brain and body; but he may be detached from them, at least at present, because of his particular stewardship of values—“the realm of God” in each man, with which the harried and hungry worker has not had time to grow familiar.

The revolutionary proletariat, in revolt against the

Church of his exploiters which was frequently his landlord, always his enemy, could not trouble about God. There were good functional reasons for the atheism of most Marxists. The word "God" had been monopolized too long by the apologists of the class of exploitation: theologians, philosophers, poets! To detach (as Spinoza did) the reality in God from all the accumulated lies, is a problem that calls for subtlety beyond the present anguished state of the masses; for energy that the masses and their immediate leaders cannot spare from the day's struggle. It is unhistorical to expect the active revolutionist of our time to do more than reject the false "God" of the churches and the synagogues. Yet the true experience of God must not die even in the heat of revolutionary battle. The first Marxist ends cannot be won, and man be raised from animal penury and fear into the human stage of security and peace, unless the individual finds life good: and this can be only through the pervading sense of God. The experience of the divine in mortal life must be preserved. Wherefore, there is need today of a people, scattered through the nations, that know and nurture the experience of God. By the tradition of ages, by their ancient prophets and their modern thinkers, the Jews have inherited the challenge and the right to be such a people.

## 5

This Jewish "remnant"—and only the remnant, through the ages, has preserved the Jew—will be loyal

to the classes of social progress; but through its consciousness of God it will be still separate, and must remain so. It will understand the functional "atheism" of many simple-minded revolutionists, and not demand that it be understood in return. The God in man will be the still secret treasure it must lovingly nurture against the day when men, free of fear and hunger, learn to look within themselves where God lives. Thus, the Jews will still be a peculiar people. And they will be subject to the dislike and distrust of the zealot for whom the word "God" is anathema; although it was in the name of God that his values of social justice and individual dignity were preserved and prepared, through the barbaric ages.

Now, a majority cannot rise to so high a challenge of rebirth. Bankers, merchants, lawyers, professional men, and politicians, even artisans and mechanics among the Jews, will not yield their old allegiance to the middle class, although that class turns (as it is turning!) against them. And these will disappear in the general human welter, as Jews have disappeared in Assyria, Babylon, Alexandria, and Rome. But what a magnificent Remnant there may be! The teacher, the doctor, the engineer, the clear-eyed man of commerce, who knows and hates the rottenness of capitalist commerce, the Jewish worker and the student—above all, the Jewish student! Already, these are on the side of the productive classes that alone hold the energy to remake the world. Already, they accept Marx. Let them fulfill this knowledge with devotion to the inward

value—the God whom Spinoza has explored in man and in matter—and there will be again, in the world, a Jewish Remnant!

Persecution? It is already here, even in America; and as the capitalistic era shrinks, darkens and despairs, it will grow worse. The lesson of Hitler, in offering the Jew as the traditional scapegoat for the accumulated rage of a bewildered people, is bound to be learned; already we have our little Hitlers, profiteers of suffering stupidity and blindness. The Jewish people are going to suffer. And for those who are individually and innocently hurt, and who know not why, there can be no soothing words. Before their anguish, we can only bow our heads, humbly, as they enact the world-old mystery of pain. But at least, for the conscious Jew, the real Jew, there will again be reason for Jewishness, reason to bear his persecution; and comrades to help him bear it. And if individual Jews die, their death will be in the cause of humane life; no man can ask a higher guerdon. And the history of the Jews will hearten them with knowledge, that when a people is ready to be persecuted and to die for a good cause, the cause lives—and the people.

1933

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## IV: THAT ISRAEL MAY LIVE

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## THAT ISRAEL MAY LIVE

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IN HIS recent book, *A Travers le Désastre*, Jacques Maritain, whose love for Israel is deep, deplores "the striking lack of prophets among the Jews in whom, persecuted throughout the world, the spirit of prophecy remains unlighted." M. Maritain would not deny that there are Jews today of high genius in all fields of the mind and spirit. What he has noted, perhaps unconsciously, is the almost irresistible propulsion of creative Jewish men *away* from the Jewish fold: their seemingly basic need, in order to express themselves, to leave Israel and Judaism behind them. Who would deny, for instance, that there was, in a philosopher like Bergson, a definite religious strain which grew stronger, deeper, and eventually in his last book: *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion* overwhelmed the abstract thinker? Who can fail to see in a consciously secular scientist like Freud, a moral devotion, a rugged, stubborn purity and ruthlessness of spirit, that are not only religious but specifically Jewish? Take the outstanding contemporary Jews in almost every domain: a father and protector of artists in New York's Philistia, like Alfred Stieglitz; a literary genius like Franz Kafka; a passionate servant of atheist world-revolution like Leon Trotsky—you will find in them all

the wholeness of love for their cause and for mankind, the integration of their lives and their vision, which relate them to the family of prophets, indeed, of Jewish prophets; and at the same time you will find them estranged from or indifferent to the great Jewish tradition which formed and fed them.

It is true that thousands of such able but "lost" Jews go out into the world, loving and trying to practice *in a secular form* that social justice whose heart is the Jewish love of one's brother in God. It is true that the average unbelieving Jew brings into the gentile world more than an average devotion to truth and charity. And the world benefits by this; but not the body of Israel. The creative cycle is broken; the seed is scattered.

In the terms of that immediate Vision of God, whereby the Jews have lived, the loss is even greater. There are good Priests in Israel today, and I say nothing against them; indeed, I pray them to accept the humility in which I speak of Jewish matters. But in all previous times, these pastors have performed their Jewish duties, guided and nurtured by wise and holy men . . . by the *seers and knowers* who were not remote from their Jewish communes; who translated the word of God into the daily act, the daily bread of their humble brothers; who solved the homely problems of men and women in the light of an eternal Vision, because they were as close to the problems as they were to the Vision. Of such immediate relations were born

the Talmud, the Rabbinic Responsa; and by means of them, Israel not alone survived; it reached its greatest cultural heights. I, for one, am convinced that medieval Europe marked in some ways the highest glory of Israel. There were the communities, each one ostensibly a little island in the storming gentile sea; but truly these "islands" were joined together and were organically knit with the Christian world. Perhaps they were despised, persecuted, subject to periodic pogroms; the integral connection between the Jewries and the outer world, as between the Jewish community and the men who represented Israel's highest creative power, was unbroken.

Let us examine this historic health: to understand it will at once shed light on the present disease of Judaism; on the sinister truth that today what is creative and inspired in Israel has the fatal tendency to abandon Jewish forms and Jewish life; leaving the community like a prostrate body without eyes and mind, at the tragic hour when the sheer need of self-preservation cries for vision and for quick, deep thinking.

The survival of the Jews in Christian Europe was no miracle; the miracle (if any) was the marvelous equipment of the Jews for survival. Every Jew was some kind of producer either for Jewry or for the world. Even the hated money-lender provided the isolated economies of Europe with the beginnings of exchange and integration which were to eventuate in the modern industrial system. The Jews were on the side of

progress in strictly socio-economic terms. The revolutionary class was the burghers; and these were the Jews' natural allies.

In the fields of ideas, science, religion, the Jews also were of the vanguard. Gabirol, Maimonides, Crescas nourished Europe, but wrote for their own people. The Jewish cartographers and financiers served in the same act their own Jewish interests, their Princes and the world's future. There was *organic continuity and integration* between the highest forces of Israel, the common life of the Jews and the progressive direction of the world. This relation not alone justified the Jews; it made them live, and it provided the socio-intellectual rationale of their survival.

Within the Jewish commune itself, the head and the heart ruled: I mean, the Rabbis, the scholars, the good men, the *inspired* men. In the gentile world, where the problem of survival was less acute, this was not the case: a dualism reigned that gave the leadership to brawn and belly (soldiers and landlords, later, demagogues and millionaires), irrespective of moral eminence. The Christian world, too, had its "head and heart:" its wise men and its seers; they did not rule even by indirection. It is not clearly seen by us today, that the 613 commandments were a methodology for living: an actual means for bringing God into the texture of daily Jewish practice not alone by precept, but by the assimilation of the Jews' creative genius. The singer could fuse the music welling from his heart into the synagogual service; the young poet's passion could

accompany the ancestral Psalmist and Prophet. The wise man found no problem high or low which his community did not invite him to solve: whether it was some technicality of commerce, some subtle marital conflict, or the transcendent mystery of God in Israel's daily life.

Without this inward integration of forces, there could have been no continuity from Jewry to Christendom and Islam. A self-stultified Israel could scarcely have survived in that hostile world; it was only because the truth was clearly expressed within Jewish life that Christian and Moslem were compelled again and again to recognize and deal with Israel. It was the Jews' devotion to God that made visible to the gentile, despite the virulent Jew-baiting, that one God was immanent upon the world, and that a kindred ideal of service to the transcendent meanings of life allied all the peoples.

I repeat: the Jews got along in the world, because they proved that they belonged in the world. The nucleus of this evidence was the Jewish commune. From humblest servant to most inspired religious genius, the Jews belonged together because they worked, loved, dreamed together. And they survived in the gentile world because (both as factors in a loose economic system and as witnesses of the truth) they belonged in it; and because, despite every discord, they shared the values of the best and strongest of their brothers.

The action of the Jews among themselves was based on love; the work of the Jews with the outside world was based on function. Both kinds of action depended

upon and nourished *knowledge*. And the Jews, aggressively, in their ethic, their ritual, their use of their own seers and poets, encouraged knowledge. A threatened organism has to know its strength; and the source of strength for a cultural organism like the Jews is knowledge . . . the sole fundamental source. As difficulties grew in Israel, it cultivated means for knowledge. The mystical periods . . . of the Kabala, Chasidism, etc., . . . may appear to us clumsy and of archaic form; they were nonetheless developments, in accord with the spirit of their times, of Israel's Knowledge. The core of this knowledge is relationship with God: to shift to a truer figure, this knowledge is the breath of Israel without which, *constantly renewed*, it must stifle and die. A biological organism has to breathe air; the cultural organism that is the Jews *has to breathe God*.

## 2

I am speaking, not in metaphors and riddles, but of a process factual as the intake of air by our lungs and blood. The Jews have become a people who believe many things and know nothing. We can believe in God and serve Mammon. We can believe in the dignity of man and act cowards; we can believe in truth and live lies. We can believe we're Jews by venerating the traditions of the fathers, listening in silence to the preachments of our Rabbis, accepting the Bible as an inspired word—and make of our daily lives a constant, deliberate denial of the Israel and the God we believe in.

With knowledge, it is not so; for knowledge is experience and act. What we know, we do; what we make, we know. What we know, we are.

Now, I am aware that the confession: "The good that I would do, I do not do and the evil I would not do, that I do," may be applied to every religion, to every human being. It may seem that I am unduly severe with the Jewish people. But life—and God—are the severe ones. Much having been allotted to the Jews in the deep Drama of Man, much is expected of them. An exalted standard of God's love has become their very substance. And their way of life made it real. Unlike the other culture-peoples (in whom knowledge and prophecy remained haphazard personal achievements), the Jews as a people became *knowers* . . . which means *doers*: they were not content to be *believers*. They did not, like the Platonizing Greeks, believe in God; they knew first of all the nature of man and this knowing meant to love and to strive; and the substance of these human deeds was to know God. The Jew enacted the reality of man by furthering man's dignity and common brotherhood. That was to know God. The Jew did not believe that it was pleasant and profitable to seek truth and the idea of God: he knew that God was of the dynamic substance of man, real as the blood. Insofar as he knew it, he established truth and love upon the earth; insofar as he *did* it, he *knew* God.

The knowledge of God has a personal dimension in daily action. It has also a social dimension. The man who knows himself (the sole conduit to knowing God)

is aware of his responsible, fraternal relationship with every human life; knows his organic need to enact this brotherhood for his own health in the normal daily dealings of family and community. The fruit is democracy and justice. The sole seed from which these spring is love: the love that men can know only insofar as they have known God and as the petty loves of their individual, class, and communal egoisms are, by the great love, overpowered. The social enactment of knowledge is therefore an *ethic*: both an individual and a political ethic.

Another means whereby knowledge is achieved in the individual and the commune is *esthetic*. The artistic act (including, of course, the written and spoken word) is an *organism of cognition*. (Not a means of information.) Through it, the connectedness between the self and the non-self is experienced. Philosophy and science and theology establish the *belief* in this connectedness, adumbrating it until man is linked with the Cosmos. Art establishes, not the belief, but the *knowledge*—adumbrating it to the high art that links man with God and that discovers God in man, and that we know as Scripture. That is all that beauty means: the recognition of an experience of harmony, unity, love, between our self and what we contemplate, bringing the word beautiful to our hearts. The artist is not consciously concerned with beauty but with truth: beauty is the effect in us of the experience he has made possible. The artist is an artisan of knowledge; and as his scope deepens, as his materials become universal, we call him

seer and prophet. We prate enough about art; we fill pages of our papers with "literary news": almost all of it is alien to art's main purpose which is not to titillate, drug, flatter, or inform. We forget the relation between the artist and the *knower*.

Now it is plain that the old Jewish community I have described was a remarkably good instrument for knowledge. In the slang of our day, "it had just about everything." Its members through a thousand daily deeds suffused God into their lives; its social hierarchy gave leadership to its devoted and far-seeing men; it assimilated in the synagogual and home ceremonies the experience of its artists and knowers; in its ties with the outer world, it performed economic works that were in the dynamic direction of that social justice which is an imperative of Jewish knowledge; finally, in the thought of its men of science and religion it was in harmony with the progressive forces of the gentiles.

And it is equally plain that the modern Jewish community (because it is archetypical, let us confine ourselves to the American scene) "has very little"; has ceased, in every respect that I have noted, to be a kindred instrument of knowledge. This community today finds itself in a minority group in an exploding world. The same historical process which, six hundred years ago, allied it with the progressive European burghers, now implicates it in the main with the decadent bourgeoisie whose first frenzied act, as it faces extinction, is to turn against it. The same sinister alliance burdens it with functions no longer productive but grown para-

sitic \* and with ideologies hostile both to the progressive forces of our time and to the immemorial Jewish principle of social justice. There is a vast abyss between their inherited rituals (the ancient methodology of living) and the way Jews must live in order not to starve. Nor can the old community forms absorb the art and wisdom of new spiritual leaders who (whether their work be esthetic or scientific or in the field of social reform) can survive only by shaking off their "Jewish bondage." Finally, the temper of the age is secular and atheist; Christian religious communities suffer, also, from this gap between their very language and their time; but such communities have ties with the world which Israel by definition cannot share. For Jewry is a whole culture of life—its complex of inward and outward relations between men totaling into an active instrument of Knowledge for the relation between men and God—or it is nothing.

Verily, the problem is vexed; infinitely more so than it was in the world of a Rashi or a Gaon of Vilna. If God chasteneth whom He loveth, Israel must be more beloved than ever. For Israel confronts a hate more passionate and more perfectly organized than Rome or Chaldea dreamed. And in this climax of incessant tempest, after thirty hundred years, Israel stands naked, stripped as never before of its defensive instruments of knowledge.

\* If the reader wants to know what I mean, I name the legal profession and all the vast armies of middlemen, brokerage, banking, ballyhoo (called advertisement), as examples.

## 3

I wish to suggest some of the lines of action by which Israel may *live* in the world of today and tomorrow. I think my readers will agree that the modern Jew has become more and more what years ago I called him: *the inertial Jew* in whom knowledge, which is action and health, has faded, leaving a vague suffusion of beliefs . . . memories, habits, fears, pitiful gestures of self-defense, self-rationalization, self-accommodation. The reader will agree that to be anti-Hitler, anti-Fascist is not a Jewish program of life. The truth is, that millions of Jews, German, French, Italian, American, have been allies, active or passive, of the degenerate bourgeois values in ethic and economics that created Fascism and made Hitler possible. The bitter truth is, further, that the majority of "modern" Jews, doing lip-service to democracy or actively devoted to the cause of social reconstruction, have borrowed the shallow eighteenth-century secular psychology, the essential atheism of the middle classes, so that their action not only exiles them from the truth of Israel, but dooms their efforts to the perversion and impotence of the common liberal and Socialist dogmas. The Jewish community in a riven and maniacal world must again become an organic instrument for knowledge. This it must do, to survive. This it must do, to function again in the world. One truth is certain: the day in which

Israel ceases to serve will be the day in which Israel ceases to be.

Now, I am not going to call upon my brothers and my sisters suddenly to become saints and seers; suddenly to become intellectual athletes in order to equate *ex cathedra* the truth in the Biblical Jehovah with Einstein's and Bergson's relativistic universe: suddenly to cease earning their daily bread and the shelter of their children by abandoning the middle class and becoming (jobless) farmers and proletarians. What I shall suggest is, I hope, practical. If it is not, it is certainly not Jewish.

And let me interpolate a personal word. In a sense, it is presumptuous for me to speak to the Jewish people —particularly in the company of the learned and devoted men who have asked me for this message. I do not say, as men go, that I am an ignorant man; but yes, I am an ignorant Jew. I was not brought up as a Jew, although my Jewish origin was not concealed from me. At twenty-one, I could read in five languages: Hebrew and Yiddish were not among them. At thirty, I knew the scriptures of India and Greece and medieval Europe far better than I knew the Bible; I had attended services in scores of churches and cathedrals and never set foot in a synagogue! For myself, I discovered the Jewish Word; or rather, in a profound crisis of my life, that Word came to me straight as an answer, palpable as the flesh of my body. It is not too much, therefore, to say that I am a convert to Judaism; and as such, I humbly claim the indulgence of my betters.

The problem, then: this Jewish community of ours, consisting of neither heroes nor saints, caught in the contradictions of a hopelessly corrupt and decomposing social system, abandoned to the world's subterranean passions grown obscene through their neglect by a shallow empirical modern culture that has ignored Man, and, therefore, God, and thereby ended in Man's humiliation; this Israel whose blood and breath are peace within a world given over to the dull insanities of war and of preparation for war and of defense from war . . . this vulnerable Jewish community which cannot save itself by denying the distinction with which its ancestral glory . . . whatever its mediocre present . . . has stamped it: *What must it do?* In order to quit the sterile sentimentalisms of belief and again forge itself into an instrument of knowledge, *what must it be?* How, following again the inspired wisdom of the Hebrews, can it re-create *methodology in lieu of theology* as its basis . . . a methodology, of course, for our world and the world of our future, as Mosaic-Rabbinic law was a methodology for the world of our fathers?

I close with a few summary suggestions:

(a) The reader will have detected in what I call *knowledge*, an element of what was once called *gnosis*, as well as an active way of life which, by its approximate harmony with the truth of man's nature, makes for the experience—the sharing—of that truth. Neither of these two elements is adequate without the other (which eliminates Saint Paul, the gnostics, and the empirical rationalists); neither *alone* can be creatively

Jewish. Nevertheless, the gnostic-mystical element must be revived, for without it Torah becomes formalism. Mystical-esthetic knowledge is the blood of true religion. The Jewish community, therefore, must seek out its artists, its potential poets, mystics, prophets, treasuring them, yet leaving them their freedom. It must study methods for the inducement and education of true mystical experience. This is a vast subject which I have touched on, more than once, in my books.

(b) The nature of the *person*, as the transfigured individual, the individual integrated into both his community and into God, must be studied by every synagogue. Techniques for this study will be the Talmud-Torahs of the future. This, too, is a profound problem; and all I can do here is to refer the interested reader to such books as *The Rediscovery of America, Chart for Rough Water*, where I have at least begun to approach it. The Myth of the death of the seed in order that the grain may rise, is Jewish; and *it is the law of spiritual life*. The individual in his egoisms is crucified; the person is resurrected. Jewish wisdom has known this since Isaiah; and has not forgotten it in such recent literature as the Chasidic and the works of those two great moderns: Martin Buber and Franz Kafka. But the Synagogue appears to have forgotten.

(c) Although we cannot expect all Jews whose livelihood involves them in the nefarious capitalist system to become martyrs and give up their sole means of earning bread for their wives and children, we can demand that they bear their necessary sin in conscious-

ness and humility; that with contrite love they give all possible aid to the forces both progressive and revolutionary . . . forces also imperfect and in error . . . which struggle to replace the present socio-economic régime of greed, possessiveness and stratified injustice, with another of true democracy. Insofar as it possibly can, Israel must identify itself (as six hundred years ago) with what is creative in social reform; insofar as Israel cannot, it must know its share in the world's evil and accept adversity as the chastening and healing of God's hand.

A congregation, thus nourishing, following, and knowing its knowers; thus leading in every feasible humble act of love a way of life which *is* knowledge; thus constantly contrite and accepting of its own tragic sins in a dark world which it, too, has helped to darken, will be again—however scattered—a Jewish commune. It will not put forth Utopia; it will not, by swift magic, change the world. *But it will be changed.*

I can think of a hundred immediate possible changes. First of all, this reborn Israel will lose fear. He who strives to live the truth loses all fear . . . except the fear that he may lose the truth, which is the fear of God. And no one who seeks truth but finds it, in the measure of the humility of his seeking. The base considerations of "policy," of "accommodation and appeasement," which befoul so much of modern Jewish "thought," will vanish. Israel, the Knower, will know his organic relation with every country (like our own) that accepts the democratic vision which Israel first

received. In other lands which glorify slavery and hate, Israel will accept hate as his badge of honor. Everywhere he will enhance knowledge and save himself, not by shuddering curtailment of his Jewishness in the pitiful effort to become "invisible;" but by deepening his Jewish life and by accepting, whatever the consequences, his immemorial duty to be the keeper of his brother.

What then will follow, what then will become of Israel, we leave with God. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." There comes unto Knowledge a Faith whose joy passeth understanding.

1941

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## V: ISRAEL IN SPAIN

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## ISRAEL IN SPAIN

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IT IS not without irony that the Jewish Encyclopedia has no article on Fernando de Rojas, and that Professor Graetz in his thorough if pedestrian promenade through the History of the Jews has not so much as alighted on his name. Rojas is the first great figure, in point of time, in classic Castilian prose: and in degree, the second, and the true progenitor of Cervantes. Rojas, moreover, was undoubtedly a Jew. And aside from his place in Spain's literature, he is the author of a book, *La Celestina*, which ranks high among the books of the world.

Yet both Rojas and his novel remain obscure outside the Spanish-speaking countries and the classes in *castellano*. Even where the book is famed, an illogical doubt clings to the question of who wrote it. The reason for this should be of interest to all curious delvers into human fate and motive.

*La Comedia de Calixto y de Melibea* (the tale's original title) appeared anonymously in Burgos, in 1499, together with a lucid explanation for the author's hiding. It was written in sixteen *autos* or acts, and in the dialogue form which later was relegated to the stage and which Valle-Inclán recently revived. In 1501, being immensely popular, it reappeared in Sevilla. The

following year, Alonso de Proaza of Sevilla reissued the novel as *La Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea* with an Introduction by the author, with interpolated acts that brought the total up to twenty-one, and with the clear statement that the author was Fernando de Rojas, native of Puebla de Montalván of the Province of Toledo, and lawyer in the city of Talavera. During all the sixteenth century, it was understood that Rojas was the creator of *La Celestina*, that he had been born in 1465; that he had served as Mayor of Talavera and had died in that city toward 1522. It was moreover known that this Rojas was a converted Jew. Doubt fell gradually upon two circumstances: the authenticity of the five interpolated acts of the edition of 1502, and of the author's introduction. The additional acts were declared by critics to mar the dynamic action of the tale. And the author's statement that he had composed the book: "a lawyer on a vacation, during fifteen days in Salamanca," was supposed to prove that the whole preface was false. Thereafter, these plausible germs of doubt flourished like the green bay tree. The book was accepted as a masterpiece, and gradually Rojas was crowded from its authorship. Since Rojas had said that he had written the novel in two weeks, it became clear to Spain's critics that he was a liar—and had not written it at all. Since the five acts added later were supposed to be a blemish on the work,\* it became clear

\* I can find no internal literary evidence in these later acts for the conviction that they are the work of another pen. Even the fact

by some mysterious logic that the editor, Proaza, who had issued them, was a liar also: ergo, Rojas had nothing to do with *La Celestina*. The honor was thrust on a great politician of the era: and temporarily on two mediocre writers, Juan de Mena and Rodrigo de Cota, whose extant work utterly disproves their connection with this sumptuous prose. By the nineteenth century, *La Celestina* was definitely placed as the cornerstone in the structure of classic Spanish prose; and its Jewish author seemed almost as definitively to have been displaced by the negative attitude of the official critics.

Then, the Justice in which Rojas so profoundly believed—although a pleasant phase of it which the great pessimist possibly had not encountered—set to work in the person of Serrano y Sanz, professor at the University of Zaragoza. This scholar disregarded the gratuitously blasted credit of Proaza and of the contemporaries of *La Celestina*, who seemed to have no doubt of the authorship of Rojas. He set forth on an independent trail. He discovered the documents relative to two trials held by the Holy Inquisition in Toledo. The first (1517-1518) was the trial of Fernando de Rojas, converted Jew and accused of secret adherence to the accurst religion. The second (1525-1526) was that of Alvaro de Montalván, converted Jew as well and similarly accused, and father of the wife of the afore-

of their inferiority would not prove this: authors have been known to make comparatively poor additions to their work. But are these acts inferior? Doubtless they halt the swiftness of the theme. But this elaboration, making the book still less drama and still more novel, is very far in my judgment from being an artistic blemish.

said Rojas. From these documents and the sworn testimony of the two defendants, it is clear that Rojas was the author of *La Celestina*; the reasons for the book's anonymity are set forth; it is stated, further, that Rojas was born in Puebla de Montalván, that he practiced law in Talavera and that for many years he served as Mayor of that town. Both he and his father-in-law were acquitted by the Inquisition. A little later, the Escorial gave forth in the famous *Relaciones Geográficas* of Philip II a further corroboration of Rojas as the author of *La Celestina*. And antiquarian research has well established by internal evidence that the scene of the book is indeed Salamanca, so that Rojas' statement that he composed it in the university town is credited, even if the matter of fifteen days may have been due to the lawyer's—or to the poet's—license.

## 2

There have never been two ways of judging the work itself. The story captured Spain and was absorbed into the Spanish consciousness. The people renamed the work *La Celestina* after the dominant character of the tale. Latin, as a literary tongue, was doomed. *La Celestina* ushered in the period of classic Castilian prose. It was a founder of the *picaresque*; it was the first great Spanish novel; it was the fountain-head—in language, in style, in point of view—whence sprang the affluent currents of the creative realism of Spain's Golden Age. From this one book can be traced the linguistic not

alone of Cervantes, not alone of the pícaro—Lazarillo, Lozana la Andaluza, El Buscón; but as well the vivid and dramatic chronicles of the mystics: Santa Teresa de Jesús, Luis de León, Luis de Granada, and others.

The central plot of the tale is conventional and classic. As the original title had it, it is the tragicomedy of Calixto and Melibea. Calixto is the amorous, wealthy youth of the Comedy of Terence and Menander. He is smitten with love of the chaste lady, Melibea. He appeals to his valet, Sempronio, to help him to the embrace of his adored one. So far, we have the traditional comedic situation. But the rascality of Sempronio is not the acrobatic wickedness of Scapin. Sempronio has been brought up by a woman called La Celestina—a woman as real and mysterious as the Leonese highlands about Salamanca. The valet suggests to his master that she, if anyone, can bring the maid to bay. La Celestina, with her whores and her ruffians, with her crass Spain and her immortal soul, steps upon the scene, and the brittle Latin comedy disappears forever from a world suddenly ironic, intricate, profound, and tragic. The story is that of La Celestina's bitter success in bringing the lovers together. It need not detain us here. Two innocents are enmeshed in the lustful trammels of the confederates by whose device the man has his desire and the maid loses her virtue. La Celestina is murdered in a quarrel over the money paid by Calixto. Her murderers go to the block. Calixto himself is killed hastening from his lady to aid his servants who have been set upon by ruffians at the

instigation of La Celestina's "girls" who blame him for the loss of their mistress and their lovers. And Melibea, after a speech for whose peer in wild power, natural pathos, and Renaissance erudition, we must go to Marlowe or to Webster, flings herself to death from a high tower; while her parents lament her end in prose so majestic and terrible as to pale by contrast the verse whereby the parents of Romeo and Juliet made plaint a century later.

This analogy with *Romeo and Juliet* (a medieval romance perfected by Luigi da Porto in 1535, and transfigured by Shakespeare) leads us to the direction of Rojas' departure from the academic conventions of his day. By the design of his action, Calixto and Melibea like their servants are classic comedic characters from Plautus or Terence. In their quality, they are nearer to the great medieval lovers who came to Spain in 1508 with the Castilian version of *Amadis de Gaul*. There is somewhat, in them, of the spontaneous song of Aucassin and Nicolette; of the dire intensity of Tristan and Isolt, of the tender integrity of Romeo and Juliet. But here, too, the analogy is formal and of the surface. Like the famous lovers of the Middle Ages, their romance is broken: but in the different nature of the fate that mars them, we find the essence of Rojas—the element that makes him great and, also, that makes him modern.

Between Amadis at penance upon the tristful *Pena* and his Oriana, stand vows of chivalry; between Tristan and Isolt, between Lancelot and Guinevere, stand

vows of matrimony; between Romeo and Juliet, stand the loyal hates of an old family feud. Calixto and Melibea are destroyed by none of these; they are destroyed by *fulfillment*. Between them comes a fate infinitely more tragic: the fruit of their love that drew them, the success of the will that made them triumph over their apartness. The fulfillment of their passion was won by passionate means—craft, lust, the compliance of appetite and will: it was the world of La Celestina that brought this fair love to fruitage, and, by its inherent kind, effaced it.

Here, of course, are elements which we do not meet in the Roman comedy nor in the romance of the Teuton. Fresh qualities enrich the esthetic of the written tale—qualities of the sort that make great art: the psychological, the moral, the ironic—above all, the vision of human fate as an organic growth. They are qualities that for a while were typical of the art of Spain and that have ever determined the life expression of the Jews.

Calixto and Melibea are drawn tenderly. He is the generous, headstrong youth blinded by passion, the ready puppet of his villainous servants and of La Celestina. She lives for us, a maid as fragrant and as clear as Juliet. But she is Spanish: she is, in consequence, richer in intellectual and social implications than her younger English sister of Capulet and Verona. Her rebuff to Calixto's declaration in the first act when, hunting his stray falcon, he finds love, is not perfunctory and not conventional; it has the serene passionate-

ness of a moral faith. Melibea is graciously sweet; but she has an heroic stamina, an eventual independence, that are unexcelled in the modern fiction by which woman is supposed to have come into her own. Her "fall" is plausible and moving, because it is precisely her virtues which are moved by the methods of La Celestina. She is seduced, not—in the usual way—by the fair body of Calixto, but by the subtle spirit of a corrupt old woman. La Celestina plays on her generosity, on her pity, on her fundamental courage. The aged sinner knows that beneath the fragrance of this girl is daring; that her chastity in maidenhood can be transfigured into the chaste whole giving of the woman in love. No outer accident, no conventional code, no love-charm, and no ruse undo Melibea. And no romantic passion. She gives herself, because her most intimate virtues have within them the appetite of risk, the incentive toward corruption, the daring of death. How far we are from the flat sweet surfaces of the *Romance!* This is the impenetralia of Tragedy. It is the aspect of sex towards which Thomas Hardy groped, and which inspired Tolstoi; it is anti-pagan, non-romantic; and it is Jewish.

A cruel counterpoint: this lovely idyll of Calixto and Melibea foundering in the crass and hideous world of La Celestina. But for all its ruthless, almost sadistic treatment, it would have failed (like so much of the esthetic performance of that intricate day when the modern soul was stirring) were it not for the achievement in portraiture of the book's central person—La Celestina.

This woman is a gigantic creation. The Spaniards are right to rank her high at the side of Don Quixote—her one clear superior in Spanish letters. La Celestina is a procuress: a woman steeped and hardened in the vices of her world. She is a receiver of stolen goods, a manager of prostitutes, a revumper of “virgins,” a dealer in love charms: she is the chief impresario of lust to a rich town full of clerics, bachelors, and priests. Her “family” consists of whores and ruffians. Thus, the façade of La Celestina. But the depths are radiant. Ugly passion comes mysteriously close in her to the passion of the saint and the hero. She is a true demon—a true fallen angel. There is neither sentimentalism nor doctrine in Rojas’s portrait. The life itself—as in certain characters of Dostoevski—is a bewildering fugue of vice and virtue, of sin and beatitude. But there is naught in the works of the great Russian (in whose esthetic lives the parabolic line of the prophets and the evangelists) so sculpturally sheer as La Celestina. The character is esthetically cold, in the sense that it is utterly detached from any comment on the part of the creator. She plies her trade. She plies it less for love of adventure and of money than as her inevitable means of self-expression. And at the end comes the ignoble, the unlovely death. There is no moralizing, no “aside,” no lyrical deformation. For such intact portraiture one must go back to Dante—or to the narrative Scriptures of the Hebrews. One knows throughout the action that there is divine mystery in this sinful creature: La Celestina possesses human power, intuition, a smoldering

spiritual passion. Inscrutably she is a servant—and a proof—of God. And it is this depth of her which makes possible her approach to Melibea—which makes possible the whole sordid, cruel, luminous tale.

## 3

Of course, there is nothing Jewish about the human and literary materials of *La Celestina*. The prostitutes are (until Cervantes) the best drawn of their kind—but it is the race of shrewish, tender, erring women which was to people the *picaresque* books of Spain. The rascals who undo both the lovers and their undoer, La Celestina, are, beneath their classical surface, the hard passionate Spaniard who was reborn a little later in the works of Quevedo and Mateo Alemán. Calixto and Melibea are creations that adhere closely to the epoch, and transcend it, not through any racial trait, but in the quality and depth of stuff with which their author was able to endow them. The procuress herself is a whole world: but it is this world of an emerging era. She is the Medieval in her loamy base; she is Renaissance in her dynamic implications. And she is Spain in her events. Her nearest relations are Chaucer's Wife of Bath, the Trota-Conventos of the Poet of Hita, and Rabelais' Panurge. She is unique—like these: and like these typical of that last harmonious European era—when all Europe swept from the Church as a dominant mold into the windy and pregnant chaos of individual assertion. . . . But if all these stuffs are

of the Renaissance of Spain, the design that Rojas makes of them is Jewish.

Jewish is the irony of *La Celestina*. Love's tender idyll is rotted and mangled by the pragmatic world to which it has appealed for its fulfillment. Loveliness is destroyed by lust, because deeply they are one. The whole childlike fantasy of the Middle Ages is suddenly confronted with the fate of its own will: a fate of evil and of sordid passion. The radiant bubble is burst: the sweet amours of youth and maid lead to the world—and to the death—of La Celestina and of her ruffian crew.

Jewish too is the book's mystic dramatization of Justice as an element implicit in the nature of events. This meeting of love and lust, of vice and beauty, this hot-and-cold inmixture of vision and of despair, is Jewish. Mortification of the flesh, the immanence of a God, not of pity but of wrath, a natural God of Justice, a God who is no respecter of persons—such are the haunting presences of *La Celestina*. It is as if a mordant sage had taken the pagan dreams of his time—chivalry, youth and virtuous love—and had said: "But here is the truth. The flower of Calixto and Melibea bears the fruit of La Celestina. The truth is more terrible still. For in her immemorial sin lives the love and the nostalgia of Calixto and of Melibea. They are one: they are the eternal balance of love and pain, of vision and of death."

Fernando de Rojas was a converted Jew, a man of position and of culture. His intellectual materials,

doubtless his practical ideals also, were those of the Castile of his day—the heroic era of *Los Reyes Católicos*, Fernando and Isabela. The Jew in him was necessarily confined to the essential, to the implicit: it was a matter of accent and of point of view. We come here upon a problem too profound for this brief chapter: to a consideration of the fact that the Jewish element in the book of Rojas is universally Spanish, that it is an element integral in the expression of classic Spain.

The language of *La Celestina* is the first great Castilian prose. Rhythmic, muscular, racy, plastic, it is the prose from which the masters of the *Siglo de Oro* were to form their own. Here, in germ, is the organ of the Mystics: slow and intimate in Santa Teresa de Jesús, swift, dramatic, erudite in Luis de León. Here, in germ, is the fertile music in which the tales of the pícaros were to be written. Here, above all, is the source of the immense, still splendor of Cervantes. Castilian is a Latin tongue: and these masters were Catholics and Spaniards. What is there Jewish here? Qualities as subtle and decisive as those which made this Castilian lawyer turn a tale of love and of adventure into a mystery of wrath and justice. Rome does not speak so clear in the classic language of Castile as do the Chroniclers and the Prophets. Luis de León read Horace and wrote his book on *Los Nombres de Cristo*. But the *Ketubim*, the *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Ecclesiasticus* by Ben Sira, are closer to the rhythm of his words than Roman rhetoric or Thomist logic. Rojas was a Jew: Luis de León probably had Jewish

blood; but the similar parabolic line, an equal accent, live in such poets as San Juan de la Cruz, as Góngora, whose "blood was pure;" and they informed the prophetic creator of Don Quixote.

A whole book must be written to place and to elucidate this question of the osmosis in Spain of Jewish and Arabic and Christian thought. We cannot dwell upon it here. Conceivably many Jews of the Age of Rojas might have written works which revealed no Jewish trait: certainly many Spaniards with no Jewish background produced works in which traits of Jewish thought are clear. *La Celestina* was absorbed in the body of Spain's culture because the book's psychological mood harmonized with the spirit of the land. Its Jewish traits were deeply Spanish ones. Jewish thought, integral and co-ordinate in Spain from the day of Gabírol to the day of León Hebreo, became merely more subtly suffused throughout the Spanish nature, after the expulsion of the body of professing Jews in 1492.

1925



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## **VI: ISRAEL IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

**A. IN AMERICA HISPANA**

**B. IN THE UNITED STATES**

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## ISRAEL IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

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### A. IN AMERICA HISPANA

I HAVE always found the simplest discussion of the Jews a tremendously hard task, because of the need of defining and redefining terms which in other subjects may be taken for granted. The Jews themselves are not agreed about what the Jews are; nor about the kind of functions and relations—religious, social, political, racial—which will determine their future in this dangerous world. The topic before me enhances these basic difficulties, through the need of defining America Hispana for us Americans, who know far less about the other half of our hemisphere than we do about Europe or Asia.

In order to reduce our problem to workable dimensions, let me begin by stating what I shall *not* discuss. I shall say nothing of the profound sorrow of all Jews, indeed of all men, before the horror of what is happening to their Jewish brethren in Europe. That sorrow, only silence can honor. It is part, integral and essential, of the human dolor of our day; and it should be within the premise of all our thought and all our action. Now, more than ever, the Jew must walk with dignity. It is

his tragic privilege to be the symbolic victim of the scourge whose incarnate symbol is Adolf Hitler. It is the Jew's sacred duty never to forget that his suffering today is the suffering of all men; never to fail so to speak of the sorrowing of his people that all men may know his awareness that humanity is suffering.

Perhaps the Jews today are being tried more than any other folk. But also they should be more conscious of what this trial means, which the world's falsehood and injustice have brought upon the world. Their consciousness, if they sustain it, is their strength and their salvation. Today, in the shambles of Poland, I can see the faces of Jews going to their death, illumined and ennobled by this consciousness. They would not change places with their executioners. This is what I mean by dignity. This, humbly, we must emulate by our constant asseveration that it is Man who suffers.

As we approach our topic: the place of the Jews in Latin America, we shall learn that the definition of our terms almost answers our question. Understand what the Jews are, understand what America Hispana is, understand the basic need of the world, and Israel's function in Ibero-America will become clear as a geometrically proven proposition.

What I mean by our first term, the Jews, need not long delay us. I have never believed that the Jews have greater talents, greater virtues, more intelligence, than certain other peoples. What has distinguished them has been a precise culture, a methodology for uniting the

needs of common life with those transcending human aspirations which we call of God. Other peoples have had prophets deep and great as the prophets of the Jews. The Jewish genius has been the approximate incorporation of the wisdom of their seers into everyday existence. Far more than other peoples, they have made the spirit of their great men into the body of their common conduct.

I take it as axiomatic that human life has two great elemental needs: the empirical—what the Bible knows as “bread”—and the transcendent. Man lives within nature as a natural body; and yet aspires dynamically toward values and a truth beyond natural dimensions. These two elements, indissolubly merged in all human behavior higher than the visceral, make the reality of man. The Jews, therefore, in their uniting of these two dynamic elements—through their history, their ethic, even their mysticism—may be said to have revealed a remarkable genius for reality. Their culture has been based on the principle of *what man really is*. No wonder they have survived many another more brilliant culture. No wonder the maniacal forces of Fascism, which is essentially anti-human, suicidal, singles out the Jew for suppression. And no doubt the Jews—if they hold to their health, which is the principle of reality—will be the ultimate victor in the present battle. So long as man survives, a folk whose culture is based on knowledge of man and on a way of life which humbly serves man’s reality and destiny has a far better chance to live

than its diseased oppressors, who repudiate that reality and betray that destiny.

Do not assume I have forgotten my subject. If I can establish a certain vision of what the Jews are today, of what Latin America promises to be tomorrow, and of the essential unity whose lack is the disease and horror of our time, the parts will fall into place. I proceed therefore to discuss two fallacies about the Jews, which Jews themselves commonly believe.

The first is that Jews are Orientals. If there is any cultured people in the world which deserves to be called Occidental or Western, it is the Jews. By Western, we mean first of all Europe, as contradistinguished from Asia and from North Africa, whose cultural influences have been predominantly of the Near East. What is the cultural signature of Europe? The value and the dignity of the person; the capacity of the personal will of man to create for himself a life that has intrinsic meaning beyond the flux of nature; the integral relation of this personal will (if it is correctly understood) with the social will; and of both with that essential reality which we call the will of God.

In a word, the cultural signature of Europe is the Judeo-Christian tradition which created Europe; whose roots are in the literature of the Bible and in Jewish-Alexandrian thought. If the Jew has been one of the chief architects of Occidental Europe and has lived during the greater part of his history in Europe, how can the Jew properly be called an Oriental? The logic is as absurd as it would be to say that the English are

Norsemen and Frenchmen because their ancestors came from the coasts of Scandinavia and Normandy.

Another culture which has been a great architect of Europe is the Greek. From the beginning, in terms of their characteristics, the Greeks have been more Oriental than the Jews. In spite of Socrates, the fundamental European concept of the person did not mature in Greek, even in Athenian life. It matured in Palestine and Alexandria, shaped and disciplined by Greek logic. The true integer of Greek culture was the *polis*, the small city, a collectivist nucleus of value, closer to the Oriental mind than to the European.

As the Greek cities became decadent, a new focus of value took its place: the Idea of Plato. Not the personal life as the articulation of universal values (the base of Jewish and Christian ethics), but the abstract idea, was the Platonic unit of the real. This mode of thought is obviously closer to certain Oriental modes, notably the Hindu, than to the Western, the Jewish, the European.

Platonism became neo-Platonism; and this Oriental element kept the medieval Catholic Republic of Europe dualistic. The element of personal will, as integral with universal and divine values, was Jewish; it was far deeper than the limited social will of ancient Rome. The element of sacramentalism was Greek and neo-Platonic. In the Reformation and the Renaissance, this Greek factor in Europe lost ground; the Jewish element became enormously strengthened. I cannot go into this complex subject deeply here. My need has been

merely to stress the absurdity of the idea that the Jews as a culture-folk have been Oriental or in any way alien to Europe.

Few people, by the way, appear to have observed that the philosophy of Hitler is a kind of hideous caricature of Platonism. Plato's Republic was based on slavery; so is Hitler's. Plato's Republic rested on a rigid caste division; so does Hitler's. Plato's Republic was ethnically homogeneous; so would be Hitler's "new order" if he succeeded in his deliberate plan of wiping out most of the non-Germanic bloods of Europe. Platonism implies a basic contempt for earthly existence, an exaltation of the Idea: the idea of truth, of which Hitler's contempt for individual lives and exaltation of war and the fatherland are degenerate versions.

I am not drawing similitudes. Race simplicity in the Greek *polis* was a natural product; today in our complex world it is a degenerate atavism. I wish merely to point out that Nazism, with its morbid parallels to Greek thought, is anti-European as well as anti-Jewish. The "republic" of even the earliest Hebrew prophets was closer to the democracy of modern Europeans and Americans than the republics not only of the Fascists but as well of Plato.

The other common error about the Jews, also significantly shared by the Jews themselves, is that they are a people of the city, essentially bourgeois, commercial, and urban. But Jewish culture has been agrarian; indeed in good part pastoral. The cities of the Diaspora from Alexandria to Spain and Provence were not urban

in our modern sense but nuclei of agricultural life. Even in modern times, with the Jews deliberately forced off the land in many countries, a vital part of Jewry continued to come from Eastern Europe, which is not bourgeois or urban. In Palestine and in Russia, the Jews have shown their adaptability to modern farming. What kind of self-ignorance is this which moves a folk with thirty centuries of history to judge its own nature by the life of a fragment of itself during less than a tenth of its entire life-span?

If the Jew has survived in the city, in the ghetto and in the modern slum, has it not been precisely insofar as his culture remained rooted in the wholeness and wisdom of his fathers, who lived upon the land and who saw God not only in their hearts but in the trees and leaping hills? The modern metropolis is a monstrosity, doomed—as Lewis Mumford has definitively shown—to die in a few years. It has created no great culture. Only those people have survived in it, and will survive, whose intuitions pierce below the city streets and rise above the city towers. Among them, notably, has been the Jew: not the bourgeois and “successful” Jew, whose spiritual ancestors remained in Babylon and Egypt, but the Jewish poor and the Jewish humble.

The essentially Western spirit of the Jew and his at-homeness in an agricultural world will serve to situate him in America Hispana and to illuminate his potential fitness to play a part in Latin America's preponderantly non-industrial economy.

Latin America or, more properly, Ibero-America is a vast and intricately varied complex ranging from countries predominantly Hispano-Indian, like Mexico or Peru, to nations like Argentina and Costa Rica, which are almost entirely European in race, with large non-Spanish elements, and like Haiti, Cuba, Brazil, in which the African strains are strong. It is hard to generalize about so enormous and enormously rich a world. For our purpose, it is enough to say that, whereas the United States has its cultural roots in eighteenth-century Europe, Ibero-America—insofar as it stems from Europe at all—derives from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: from the medieval Church and the Renaissance, rather than from the late stages of the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution. From this, its weakness in technical development; from this, its comparative strength in the humanistic disciplines. Its humanism was not severed from deep religious roots; from that organic sense of wholeness which Western man began to lose as his technical proficiency evolved. And in this truth, which is due not only to the Hispanic but as well to Indian and African strains in Ibero-American culture, the at-homeness of the Jew in Ibero-America may be gauged. Provided, of course, that the Jew himself has remained intact!

Now we must note how his creative place in the whole modern world (not only in our hemisphere) has been endangered by three widespread forms of cultural corruption, originating in Europe and as danger-

ous to the survival of the Jewish ethos, as are the sadists of Hitler.

The first of these corruptions, the least serious, has been the most observed. In Eastern Europe the Jews' religion was invaded by the superstitions of the primitive folk among whom they lived. In Chasidism, for instance, elements of demonology and of saint worship, naive notions about personal survival, crept in, and made the religious life of these communities almost as infantile as that of their peasant neighbors. But in the West of Europe, many Jews succumbed to more dangerous corruptions. I refer to the superstitions of modern materialism, mechanolatry, science worship, and empirical rationalism: all these arrogant false products of a superficial humanism, which, from the eighteenth century forward, denied the intuitive and organic bases of knowledge, substituting sterile accumulations of facts for man's capacity to know through the experience of religion.

The Jewish victims of this common corruption became naturally the most conspicuous leaders, since they shared the common cultural disease of the gentile world. Its immediate effect on the Jews, as on all European culture, was a loss of self-knowledge and that peculiar modern delusion which Reinhold Niebuhr has admirably termed "ignorance of ignorance." Not knowing man, how could the Jew know the Jew? Not knowing his own nature and the meaning of his history, how could he know, for instance, the real source of modern German anti-Semitism, which is anti-

Europeanism: the revulsion in Europe against Europe, brought about by Europe's self-betrayal?

Close to this corruption of the "advanced" Jews of the West is their gravest error of all: the loyalty of a large group of just these "advanced" and "leading" Jews to an exploiting and deteriorating class.

Social justice is not absolute; it is a dynamic relation. It is the Mosaic commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," enacted by the individual and the group in pursuance of human destiny—human reality, if you will—whose growth, as the Prophets knew, was toward love and toward peace. The Jewish principle of life, which unites the empirical-natural elements of the Jew's needs with the values of his religion, therefore demands his active devotion to social justice. No other message is so clear in the Prophets, so persistent in the talmudic and rabbinical writings. No lesson is so strong in the Jews' survival through the centuries. Within the economic and technical limits of their day, they served the ideal of social justice, which is the principle of human reality; and therefore they lived.

In Medieval and Renaissance Europe, the bourgeoisie was the progressive class, the revolutionary class, the creative class. The loyalty of the Jews to the bourgeoisie in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, therefore, determined their position of harmony with social justice, with progress and with creative life. This harmony brought them strong allies among the gentiles during their darkest hours within hostile Europe.

This alliance with other progressive elements of Europe in large part explains their survival.

Today the situation is far different. The bourgeois class has deteriorated; it has now passed from the period of evolution to a stage of dangerous devolution. Fascism is a symptom of its disease. An important part of the Jews, in their implicit loyalty to the middle class, is in the paradoxical position of being loyal to the very social forces which seek the Jews' destruction. And this paradox is nothing but a symbolic truth; since those Jews are really betraying and hence destroying themselves.

To remain Jews, the Jews must continue their organic contact with that dynamic reality which moves toward freedom and social justice. This means that they must continue to unite the dynamism of their own lives, as they have always done in the past, with the creative social forces of the world. And this means a radical change in social outlook.

And now here are the Jews in a world new to them, America Hispana: in that oldest of American worlds, whose potentiality and unpredictability of forces make it the youngest, possibly the most promising.

Of course, the presence of the Jews in Ibero-America is no new story. Plenty of them came with the early Portuguese to the settlements of North Brazil, to Bahía and Pernambuco; and their commercial diligence was a vital factor in the growth of sugar production. When the Dutch temporarily occupied these wealthy lands, more Jews came in. These original groups, without loss

of their consciousness, have been deeply assimilated in Brazilian life.

The great influx came after the last World War; and there should be an even greater, when this war is past and the gates of Europe are thrown open. Buenos Aires has a thriving and vital community of Jews. Already it has made respectable contributions to the brilliant and various culture of the country. The outstanding dramatist of Argentina, indeed of South America, Samuel Eichelbaum, is a son of East European immigrants. So is Cesar Tiempo, fertile force in Argentine poetry. One of the most deeply respected of all Argentine journalists, a man with a continental reputation, is Alberto Gerchunoff, an editor of *La Nación*. The greatest of all modern Argentine engravers—again, of all modern engravers south of Mexico—is a young Jew, Mauricio Lasansky. Other cities, Santiago, Lima, Mexico, have small but vital communities.

The very name of Ibero-America suggests the fitness of Israel within it. For Iberia is Spain and Portugal; Iberia is the European part of Ibero-America (which is far more Indian and African than it is Latin). And it is not necessary here to insist on the great part played by the Jews in the formation of the Iberian cultures. It is true that most of the Jews today who have come to live in Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina, are not of Spanish or Portuguese descent. But they are Jews; they partake of the same ethos as the Iberian Jews who saturated the Hispanic world with Semitic values. Only insofar as they deny them-

selves are they separate from fundamental strains in the Hispanic tradition.

The great majority of the countries of Ibero-America have populations of many bloods. What we call Latin America is really Ibero-Indo-Afro-America. Here, the degenerate race simplicities of Hitler cannot take root without previous extermination of practically the whole continent. Here, inevitably, there must come to be a *symphonic* culture—or none at all. This complex ethnic and cultural symphony has already begun its great music. In it the Jews are latecomers compared to the Indians, who are so strong in Mexico, Central America, Paraguay and the countries of the Andes; or to the Africans, whose strain is dominant in Brazil, Haiti, Cuba; or to the Spanish and Portuguese, who founded their first American universities in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, in respect of the values, ideas and needs of Ibero-America, the Jews, if latecomers, are timely. Their convergence upon Hispano-American life appears to be destiny.

Deep as in our own America is the tradition of democracy in America Hispana. And where this tradition and ideal exist, the Jew cannot be a stranger unless he has become a stranger to himself. The roots of democracy—the value of the person, the destiny of social justice—are religious; and are of the Jew's religion. The democratic principle became secularized and shallow with the eighteenth century; it lived upon the rational heritage of Europe without regard to its religious

sources. Many Jews fanatically espoused this epigonic form of the philosophy of democracy; they were the ones who turned against their own religion.

But the democratic tradition in America Hispana, in which eighteenth-century rationalism was never strong, has been more deeply nourished; has remained closer to its religious roots without whose constant watering it shrivels and decays. The great tradition of the Catholic Church has been a factor in this vitality; for modern rational democracy and humanism in Europe are the heirs of the Christian Republic or, if you will, of the Judeo-Christian idea of a social Kingdom. Another source has been the rich, intuitive world of the Indian and the Negro, integrated into a modern society of technics. To the extent that he is deeply Jewish, the Jew fits deeply into the tradition of integral democracy, as—despite temporary dictatorships—it thrives in America Hispana.

What I have said of the convergence of the Jew in Ibero-America and of his fitting there, insofar as he is actively and creatively the Jew, might be called a logical imperative. This does not make it real. Theory may annotate life after the fact; but no theory, however perfect, can create it. Life is not illogical; life is before logic. Life is nutrition; life is action and love. The Jew can prove his place in America Hispana only insofar as he loves his new land and, feeding it with his spirit and blood, becomes a part of it.

1943

## B. IN THE UNITED STATES

The world is in crisis. No need to waste breath in proof of that. East and West are rent in a great war, and beneath the war burns a far greater revolution. In truth, the war is but a symptom of the dislocation of mankind in every field: political, economic, ethical, psychological, and religious: a dislocation which has precipitated us into a spiritual chaos with no new cultural forms to take the place of the old. Also, world-Jewry is in crisis. As the world-crisis has its symbol in war, the crisis of the Jew has its symbol in the plague of anti-Semitism sweeping so many of the world's sick nations. And by the same token, the crisis of the Jew is deeper than the plight of refugees. It is the crisis within Jewry itself of its relation to the modern world; the crisis of the relation of the life of modern Jews to the Jewish genius. Within Israel, indeed, there is the same dislocation, economic, intellectual, religious. The eternal spirit of Judaism does not change (no more than changes the eternal in man); but today it stifles in inherited forms that are no longer valid.

Now, in the world crisis, America is the historic focus. Shallow people believe that because the bombs are not falling on our shores, we are and can remain "outside." But America is really a center . . . a seemingly "quiet" center of the universal maelstrom. This

is true for a number of manifest reasons. Between the Western and the Eastern seas, America is open to the influences of both. Above all, it is peopled by all the races, moved by all the cultures and psychologies of Europe. The initiative of historic action has passed from Europe whose tragic errors have destroyed its freedom and are draining its resources. The world initiative cannot be immediately taken up by the three great Eastern culture-peoples: the Russians, the Chinese and the Hindus, whose powers at least for a generation will be absorbed by their own internal confusions. History therefore today makes America the potential leader. And we can carry the analogy farther. As America stands in the center of action for the world, American Jewry stands in relation to world Jewry—and for similar reasons: because of its economic power, because of the liberty it enjoys in the American commonwealth, and because there is still time to save it from the pathologies of Europe.

This brings me to the key of the Jewish promise in America's future. Despite its many new elements, racial, economic, geographical, America is a projection—one might almost say a creation of Europe. And Jewish genius is inseparable from Europe's culture. When the Pope recently said: "We are all spiritual Semites," he was uttering only half the truth. Despite its Greek elements of ideology and its Roman elements of social and legal organization, the dynamic will of Christendom, its sense of man's nature and destiny, are Jewish. The Christian churches are indeed not Jewish, but the

soul of Christianity and its roots in the reality of man are Jewish. We all know that the democratic principles of justice, of human brotherhood and freedom, and of the dignity of every man (for God is in him), stem straight from the Hebrew Prophets (among whom Jesus must be counted). But we are less likely to realize that Europe, as the home of science, as the mother of the machine, also reveals a Jewish origin. The birth of modern science was far less a matter of intellect than of will. The Greeks, the Alexandrians, the Arabs, had the intellect . . . had indeed the actual intellectual basis, for creating modern science. They lacked the purpose and will, because their sense of life directed their energies elsewhere. They accepted slavery—a social dualism; they accepted truth as a fixed contemplative value—an intellectual and spiritual dualism. Dualism prevailed in the Middle Ages; and dualism is anti-Jewish. For the Jew, truth is action; social justice is wholeness and health. Only with the Renaissance did Christendom move against the dualistic disease of Rome—although with other deviations into dualism. From the will to conquer the secrets and the fruits of earth for all men, since all men are brothers, came modern science and the machine: and this will is Jewish.

This is all a far too swift and cursory statement of the indubitable truth that Jewishness is of the essence, of the warp and woof, of Europe: of Europe, the mother of the democratic ideal, of Europe the creator of the machines which alone can set men free from

slavery, of Europe, father of the Americas. And it explains why the enemies of that great Europe are the enemies of the Jews. There is more philosophy in Hitler's anti-Semitism than his foolish foes allow. Hitler represents the will to *empty* man of all his aspiration toward love and social justice. He is the enemy of *the person* without whom democracy is hollow, the person who is indeed formed "in the image of God" insofar as God and kinship with all men are in him. He is the enemy of Western civilization, that has struggled heroically upward to enact justice and brotherly love in its social forms. The enemy of all these must be the enemy of the Jew.

Our one guide to knowledge of the future is the past and, under all, the present. The Prophets were men who knew so well the reality of Man that they understood their own times and could discern in them the times to come. If, as I have shown, the role of the Jewish spirit and of Jewish vision and will, has been integral in the unfolding of the West, the answer to the question: "What of the Jew in the future of this world?" lies before us. The survival of America depends on its translating into cogent present forms its will toward human freedom and justice. The survival of the Jew depends on his translating into cogent form the great tradition of the Jewish past. That is religion; and that has ever been the Jewish religion. It sounds simple, but it is complex—and revolutionary. The glory of the Jew has been his struggle to bridge the abyss between his deepest intuitions—which he called rightly

the Word of God, and his normal actions. "To do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God;" these are words terribly precise, terribly contemporary, terribly difficult of fulfillment.

We know what the creative trends of America have been, and the Jewish share in them. Now let us ask these questions: Has democracy been achieved? Are social justice and personal dignity assured throughout the earth? Have men learned the *reality* of their oneness, in deep and rich variety, under God—the reality which alone brings social and spiritual health because it alone is in accord with human destiny and nature? Have the swords been beaten into plowshares? Is the machine today the slave of man, freeing man from slavery? If the answer is Yes, or nearly Yes, then History might say to the Jewish folk: "For thirty hundred years, ye have travailed in blood, heartbreak, unfaltering courage; never failing, not because God chose you but because ye chose God. Your mission is achieved. The high reality of man which your genius, alone among the peoples, discerned in man's barbarous beginnings is now manifest throughout the earth in a universal democratic federation of all peoples, and in the common acceptance by all men of each man's right to worship and to create truth in his own way. *Well done, good and faithful servant.* Go now to your rest." . . . I need not insist that we hear no such word in our dolorous time. Not only has the Jew's vision of life, *the healthiest because the truest*, not been fulfilled; we find it everywhere tragically threatened and endan-

gered. Social justice, even in its fallible and faltering beginnings as we find them in the capitalist "democracies," shrinks and agonizes. Man is being unified indeed; but not upward toward his real nature of brotherhood and self-knowledge. He is being bludgeoned and regimented downward into hordes of mutually destructive slaves. The nations that resist this "revolution downward" are scattered, broken. The plowshares are being beaten into swords—or rather into lethal instruments compared with which the sword was a blessing. And the machine, which should set men free, has become the whip in the hand of Golems. The vision and work (they are one!) of the Jews is not done. It is more cryingly needed than it has ever been in history before!

Why is democracy weak? *Because it has grown remote from its own religious roots.* These roots are Jewish. Who better than the Jew, if he become once more true to himself, can revive these life-giving roots, in order that the Tree may flourish?

This means that the Jew is called upon, as never before, to be the Jew. Having said this, I realize that I have answered nothing. I have merely raised the inevitable question of what the Jew must be, of how the Jew must act, today, in our America, in order to carry on his great tradition. There is, indeed, danger in saying what I have said, and leaving it at that. Years ago, I spoke with bitterness of the *inertial Jew*—the sentimental Jew who, adoring his own echoes, betrays

the word of God. American Israel today is led and dominated by these *inertial* Jews: by Jews whose religion is as remote from their way of life as in the worst of their neighbors: by Jews who slavishly cultivate and emulate the vices, social and personal, of the decadent middle class—the exploiting class, which in crisis will turn and rend them here as it has in Germany and France: by Jews who have lost the power of self-knowledge and self-criticism, and who take the sin of anti-Semitism as an excuse for their own complacency and self-pity; by Jews, in a word, who are not Jews except through the *inertia* of habitude and custom.

The Jew functioned creatively in the past, because his individual and social acts were unified with his Jewish vision; and because this wholeness of his life—this unity between law and deed, meant approximate health: meant an essential concord with the reality of human destiny so strong that it survived the vicissitudes of ages. *The Jews survived in the past, because they functioned in the world.* In medieval Europe, for example, despite the great hostilities between them and the Christian communities, the Jews expressed in a deep form the intellectual and religious values of all men; in consequence of which, openly or secretly, they had friends and champions among the strong of Europe, and above all were supported by the economic-social trends of Europe. Moreover, in their widespread close-knit centers and in their international commerce, they were allied with the most progressive, the revolutionary elements of Europe: the burghers. Jews

were leaders in navigation, practical and theoretical; leaders in trade and finance; leaders in the sciences. They were, in their own Jewish life, *in tune with the growth of the world.*

Here is the key to what the Jews must become in the American nation, if they are to function creatively and to survive as Jews. Their allegiance must be, not with the upper middle classes that have long since lost their health and progressive virtue, but with the groups and activities and values of American life that express, today and tomorrow,—as Europe's burghers did, three centuries ago—the universal movement toward justice, personal growth and maturity of knowledge.

This may open them to persecution by the surface reactionary forces of the nation; it may brand them again as a “peculiar people” (the man of truth always seems peculiar in the marketplace of fads and falsehoods). Not persecution can destroy the Jew; not “peculiarity” can extinguish his service to the universal destiny of man. Only his own self-betrayal can achieve these Hitlerian ends.

The world is in profound reaction against the challenge of human destiny to make the next step forward. There are understandable reasons for this dangerous pause, for this menacing state of the world. Even as Fascism has had its successes because the fascist spirit was in the Democracies, anti-Semitism can succeed only insofar as the Jews themselves, by imitating the weakness and dualism of their brothers, nourish it. The anti-Semitism of the *inertial* Jew, of the coward Jew,

of the assimilationist and appeaser Jew: here is the true evil. And in America it is widespread!

Words are not enough; worship is not enough; the health of Israel has ever been that its word became flesh, that its worship proved itself in action. This is a tradition, a challenge, perhaps an aptitude, that we inherit. But only if we make it true, as our fathers did, with the blood and bone of our own lives. In this brief space, of course, I cannot go into the deep and devious problem of how . . . by what methods . . . the immemorial genius of the Jew, to create unity of his entire life, personal and social, can be transfigured into the specific terms of our American world. Those are problems for long and humble exegesis. But on these certainties, I can confidently close: Without this transformation of his vision into modern deed, the Jew will not survive; for this process has been his religion, and the secret of his survival in every clime and age. But the nearer the Jew comes to identifying himself with the immemorial values of the Jewish past, the closer he will be to the deepest values of the American tradition, and to the strongest vitalities of American culture.

1940



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## VII: THE JEW IN OUR DAY

- A. THE AMERICAN JEW
  - B. DEMOCRACY AND THE JEW
  - C. PREFACE TO A PROGRAM
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## *THE JEW IN OUR DAY*

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### A. THE AMERICAN JEW

THE JEW is not well in our America. As nowhere else in the world, he has opportunity and strength. He shares the challenge of full membership in a free nation which history now raises to its great hour. The paper assets of the American Jew today are enormous. Equally enormous is the discrepancy between his inherited values—those which have borne him through centuries of travail and creation, and the actual standards by which, both as American and Jew, he lives. If the American Jewish community is called to leadership in Israel, it is a case of “the last shall be first.” For its contribution to the spiritual and esthetic life of the American world and of the West is in woeful disproportion to its numbers and material might.

This discrepancy between ideal and act is of course not exclusively Jewish; it is a trait of our schizoid American world, whose major prophets and poets—from Roger Williams through Melville and Whitman to the contemporary—are honored more in the breach than in the observance. This dualism, since the Elizabethans archetypical of Anglo-Saxon culture, gives us a key to the ill health of the American Jew. In his need to con-

form to American life, he has applied himself too passionately well to surface rules and *mores*, unaware of the split in them from the true values of the country. His adjustment to the conditions of actual life has been too perfect to let him know that these are the conditions of a blinding, gradual death. Like all his fellow Americans, also heirs of a Great Tradition, he has become devotedly addicted to a civilization whose immediate aims exile the very values which have nurtured the people and brought forth its present promise.

One example will make clear what I mean. The most beloved figure in American history is Abraham Lincoln. Measure what we revere in this man of simple humbleness, this sharer in the guilt of all his brothers on both sides of the battle line—measure this man of sorrow, this *conscious* man, with what we cultivate and admire in the actualities of our life. Measure his total strangeness from the ways of a folk—complacent, ignorant, and greedy—which daily adores him. And yet our adoration is reasonable, for it is such traits as Lincoln's that have made us strong. In loving him, we acknowledge what is most real in ourselves, however our present life deny it. The same split is discernible in the mind and heart of the American Jew. While he lives, like his brothers, in a shallow world of the will, of acquisition, of illusive comfort, he preserves his innermost devotion to a life governed by the fear of God. For he knows this to have been the life that has given him health and lucid wit to survive.

There is no valid distance between the Jewish community in America and America as a whole, and this—this lack of distance—is at the root of the disharmony of the American Jews within their own communal life, within themselves and within their beloved country.

## 2

The heart of every paradox is an unrecognized axiom. As we study this paradox, let us first observe how it troubles the Jews themselves. One large class of successful Jewish Americans vociferously claims that there is no valid difference between the Jews and their fellow citizens; and why should there be? Let, then, no difference be noted. This point of view, constantly implied in the reactions of many Jewish leaders to the crises of the world, as well as to their own community problems, was honestly and brilliantly expressed by Jerome Frank in his *Saturday Evening Post* article to which I have previously referred. "We have," Judge Frank virtually said, "a Jewish past, as Wendell Willkie has a German past. What of it? In view of our common urgent present and our common sanguine future, let's forget about it." This response reveals for the thousandth time the failure of the average liberal mind to understand the organic nature of human history, without which understanding Jewish history becomes a tedious burden. Community is not identity. The cells of a healthy body have a common rhythm and a com-

mon transcendent purpose: which does not detract from the peculiarity of their especial functions.

A more sensitive, more nostalgic group admits that there must be found within the harmony of American life some difference to justify the continuance of themselves as Jews and as a community in the American whole. They set about seeking "good" distinctions and methods for cultivating them; always zealous against the major threat that such distinctions be too conspicuous, too real—make for any serious Jewish detachment. These conscientious leaders propose that Israel become a "mere" religious denomination, and that the reform of community life be kept within the safe confines of what they call worship, ceremony, research into Jewish history and enhancement of Jewish "culture." Lacking from their plans is the radical application of the prophetic ethics, preached in the sermons of their pulpits, to immediate political and economic problems. Such application might make a conspicuous change in the Jews' way of living; and conspicuousness is the nightmare of these good men. An effective ethics would be too much of a badge of identity like that worn by Israel in Hitler's Europe.

Look back over Israel's centuries before and after the Diaspora, and the pathos of both these attitudes is clear. Can you imagine a contemporary of Baal Shem, Rashi, Jehuda Halevi, Philo, Ezra, or Jeremiah, engaged in the effort to prove that Jews are essentially undistinguishable from their neighbors; or troubled over the

need of stimulating congregational methods to establish and justify such distinctions?

A third honorable group differs from the others in admitting the distinctions the first group denies, and in denying the need of cultivating or justifying the distinctions that the second group favors. "We are a people, a nation," it insists, "with the same right *to be* as any other. This right transcends and is antecedent to whatever cultural contributions we may have made or may make. The Jewish people need not justify its existence any more than the Dutch or the Czech." Logically, this group demands its national home. There is something gratefully simple and concrete about the Zionist's position, and I see no argument against it, provided it be kept clear that it solves no essential problem for the Jews who cannot and do not wish to make Palestine their country. For two thousand years the Jewish people have survived, not in a physical past, but in a vitally *present* way of life, which reached many of its greatest heights thousands of miles from the land of Canaan. This way of life gave them the energy, the intelligence and the devotion to adjust to tragic vicissitudes in Africa, Spain, Europe, Poland, and Russia. The past in Palestine was the formative matrix. But it was the constantly renewed present of the Jews in many lands and ages that made possible and justified their survival. To assume, like the more simple-minded political Zionists, that the Jews' tremendous experience and heritage in the entire West can be equated and written off by the repossession of Palestine, is fantastic.

I see no reason why in a decent world order tomorrow the Jews should not work out, with the Arabs, a political-economic control in the Holy Land, which the Hebrew genius stamped forever with its indelible signature. Such a Zionism would be as remote from present-day nationalisms as must be the autonomy of peoples like the Norwegians and Czechs in a rationally federated Europe. But to focus Israel's creative aspiration primarily upon this territorial form is an intolerable shrinkage; and surely no intelligent Zionist demands it. For a thousand years Hebrew genius deepened to universalism. For two thousand years destiny drove it forth into a hostile world from which its nurturing universalism saved it, and which its universalism nurtured and saved. To lop off this deep dimension from Jewish reality would be to maim the modern Jew. He cannot go back to a phase of consciousness which two millennia have superseded. Even when the homeland is rewon for that nucleus of Israel which wants to live in it and to make it into a new womb for Jewish creation, the justification of Israel for all Israel will continue to be his timeliness as a spiritual people.

Why "justification" at all? One claim of many Jews is that Israel needs no more justification for survival than any other minority people. There are small peoples whose persistence is due to their occupation of a land with which their culture has been merged and on which it continues to live. Their claim to survival is a right to their land, which instinctively they identify with the very nature of their bodies. And there is a

race like the Negro whose most obvious distinction among Americans is color. This color is only the outward symbol of a long and profound adjustment to life in another continent, which gave them a history and a culture: a possession which they instinctively seek to preserve and to transmute into American life. What is the distinctive possession of the Jews? Not a land, that most of them have not seen for two millennia. Not a color, which is a symbol of the African's adjustment to the tropic Forest. The Jews' distinction is nothing but their *religious culture*: their peculiar and total way of life which consciously "justifies" them, being their obedience to the mandate to live under God—under a universal law. Since Moses, this way of life has of course deviously changed. But the tradition of justification has not been broken. It is the land, it is the color of this people.

The life force of the Jew has been his striving in a *particular* way for that *universal* human reality which he called of God. His difference from other men has been the precise—although not exclusive—difference of a folk conscious of its universal function, and individually working it out within a common humanity less conscious and less specifically devoted to the universal. The Jew has been peculiar because his awareness was universal; because, day by day, in his most intimate acts, he was willing to live according to a prophetic vision that linked him organically with all mankind. This general statement, of course, would require analysis to synthesize it into the different phases of Jewish

history. This I have done in other chapters. Here all I must point out is that once a people has reached this height of maturity it cannot become less without betrayal. The child need not be mature. Once he is a man, he can justify his life only by remaining a man. To revert to childhood would be disease and treason. I refuse a less exacting function for the American Jew than the personal, devoted application of Jewish *maturity* to modern American life.

## 3

The Jew cannot belong to the United States dynamically as a Jew unless in an essential way he is distinct; and accepts his distinction. This does not mean that the Jews need be the one distinct people; it certainly does not mean that they *alone* can express universal values in a particular way of life—but only that they have *their* way of expressing the universal, a way which is Jewish. This is obvious, and the millions of Jews who have failed to feel this need in relation to other men, throughout history have soon lost their distinction, whether in Egypt, Babylon, Alexandria, or Europe.

But the difference of the Jew from his fellow men may vary in one historical case from another. It may be a radical difference of values from those of his hosts. This will make survival dubious. No social body could long tolerate a deeply alien organism within it. The Jew survived in the Middle Ages of Europe because

his differences expressed a common harmony with a depth of value in his Christian fellows. Although the ways of expression differed, there was much in tune between them. Moreover, the Jew performed economic functions not only useful but progressive for the health of the wider social organism. In the modern American world the peculiarity of the Jew must consist in a particular expression of a way of life that is both Jewish and deeply American. His particularity must be in basic harmony with the democratic way that is at once American and Jewish.

This paradox of Jewish survival is of course within the secret of all human individuation. The universal expresses itself ever and only through the particular. By living his Jewish distinctness, by living the prophetic values which have made the Jew a vital factor in Occidental culture, the Jew expresses root ideals of American life. In the sense of organic history, the Jew may be called a beginning, and America an end, of Europe. In the form of organic history, it may be that they must meet, in order to realize each other. By the same law, when the Jew loses his distinctness, when willfully or blindly he merges in the surface civilization of America, he not only denies his own values but alienates himself from the root energy of his country. I suspect that in every crisis of the Diaspora this disease of non-distinction from the host culture has appeared and has carried off all those *inertial* Jews whose presence even in Biblical days inspired the constant reference to the saving Remnant. The disease is classic.

Classic, also, is the cure. We must see clearly the constant dynamic of Jewish life and its relation with the health of the world we live in. This clear seeing is organic knowledge, which means organic *living*.

## 4

The health of America depends on the evolution of its democracy. To say we have attained the democratic goal is as blasphemous as to deny that we have painfully, deviously moved toward it. America is not a democratic nation. But indubitably it is more democratic than when Jefferson fought for universal suffrage, when Lincoln fought chattel slavery, and when Bryan tilted against the corporations which were absorbing, with almost no return, the wealth stolen from an expanding people.

The base of American life has been faith in the democratic destiny of man. This faith was the most revolutionary trait of our revolutionary fathers. Many of them were free thinkers, and indifferent to churches. But their political creed secularized the implicit premise of the Judeo-Christian tradition: that God is the potential, absolute presence in every human life; and that therefore in every human being there is the principle of freedom. Man can be free: *the whole man*. And the inevitable grouping of such free men will be democracy. The revolutionary fathers were too naive and sanguine. Like the Christianity which fathered them, they took the psychological process whereby the person

attains freedom too much for granted; they laid too great stress on the political process whereby free men might organize, and too little upon a methodology whereby the nuclear whole man might be formed to become free.

The failure of the democratic process in the Western world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whose final collapse was the story of the first four decades of the twentieth century, is due to the continued schism between the groups of democratic believers. On the one hand were the liberal politicalists and radical economists who ignored the psychological-religious problem of forming and freeing the whole man; on the other hand were the religionists and esthetes who ignored the social dimension of the whole man, without whose maturity within a social organism enacting justice there can be no individual freedom. The schism still exists. So long as it does, a specialized and profoundly experienced religious social body like the Jews, whose genius has been precisely the unification of the two aspects of democracy, remains historically potent. All it will need to survive is to learn how to function.

## 5

To summarize thus far: there is a profound split between the great tradition of American life and the common American way. The Jew, in his successful adaptation to the common way of America, has divorced himself from America's Great Tradition and

from his own. He is close to the creative sources of our democratic world, only insofar as he remains creatively close to the energy of his own religious culture. Hence the paradox becomes a commonplace: to the extent that he is true to his Jewishness, and thereby lives "separately and distinguishably," he is harmonious within America. And insofar as he loses himself among the surfaces of the American world, he cuts himself off from America's nourishing heart and from his own.

But this must all be made explicitly clear: how Israel's faith is not alone consonant, but organic with the democratic faith; how the common ways of American life—education, arts, pragmatic values, and religion—threaten this faith even while they appear to serve it; how fascism, anti-Semitism and war are today merely symptoms of the disease deep in the "Democracies" which fight them; and how the American Jew, insofar as he has succumbed to the common American way, betrays both America and himself.

From this picture of seeming despair, will rise integrally the great hope of the American Jew. For the disease of the common American way is the disease of the entire modern world. And therefore precisely because the American Jew is centrally involved in it, unto death, he is in the position to create, from his own crisis, consciousness and cure, an *antitoxin* to serve not alone all Israel but—again—all Western man.

This heroic destiny calls for heroic living. We are witnessing today in Europe the need of Jews to die for

their great name. Our hearts are bowed before their victory. But the hard truth is that it is easier to die than to live. The hard truth is that dying and saving from death are not enough. Races and cultures have died, not because all their flesh was massacred, but because the spirit of their survivors compounded with the assassins. If every Jew within the hand of Hitler were to disappear tomorrow, there would still be living in the world more Jews than in the days of the Rabbi Akiba.

A more terribly difficult task than to die is set by this hour upon the American Jew. It is to find a way of life and to live it. If he finds it, the Mystery of Israel may be again repeated: his way of survival may become a way of life for the world.

## B. DEMOCRACY AND THE JEW

Thus far we have seen the abyss between the common American way and the true way of America; how the American Jew, too eagerly adopting the surfaces of American life, has been untrue to his own depths and to America's. We have seen that the premise of harmony within his country means for the American Jew the acceptance of a distinction. The nub of this paradox is the commonplace that the dynamic of American life, aspiration toward democracy, is germane to the dynamic of Jewish culture and to the great Judeo-Christian tradition. Not alone the Churches have betrayed themselves with anti-democratic action, but the "Democracies" also.

Now we must more explicitly study this betrayal. We must reveal the basic anti-democratic trends in the common life of all Americans, and show that this corruption is not merely American, but typically Western. Then it will be clear how the American Jew, seeking to survive in the American scene, must inevitably establish norms of survival for all Israel, which is similarly threatened; and standards of leadership, which, as so often before in Israel's history, may serve all mankind.

This vicarious creation is not accident. If the ethos of Israel has been a particular way of life which ex-

pressed the universal reality of man in his relation to the Cosmos, how could it fail to nourish all men? And how, incidentally, could it fail to antagonize those men who, like the Fascists, yearn to escape the arduous destiny of human freedom, and to make a rationale of their retreat? In this deepest sense the World War is an attempt at world suicide. And woe to the citizens of the democracy who feel themselves free of its guilt.

It is easy to deny the democratic destiny of man. The growth toward personal and social freedom is only secondarily an ideal and doctrine. Primordially it is the dynamic of man's nature. Yet to betray or lose this destiny in the life of the individual or of an individual folk is easy, as death—compared to life—is always easy. In their rejection of man's democratic destiny the Fascists are at one with the Asiatic hordes who have never attained a sufficiently high social evolution to be conscious of it; and are expressing openly the secret unfaith in the hearts of millions in the West, who, through their lack of personal evolution, have found freedom too toilsome a burden and seek to rationalize their defeat. The organic necessity of man through his very nature to move toward freedom, is not an empirical doctrine. It cannot be proved by mere study of precedents in history, nor by mere laboratory observation of human behavior. Both history and empirical psychology may well lead to the conclusion (from which a vast majority of the two billion inhabitants of the earth have never strayed) that the essential heart of man loves enslavement. Every culture in history, including our

own, has had slave foundations; the average man in every age promptly devotes whatever freedom he inherits from his religious culture to devising new tyrants of habit, passion, and superstition.

Knowledge of the democratic destiny of man is based primarily on the intuitive knowledge that God is in every man: God, as the seed of freedom. The individual seed may, of course, not flower; no one can believe that each individual realizes in his own life the principle of freedom. Freedom is a dynamic direction, both personal and social, and it can rise only from man's consciousness and acceptance of the necessity of his being—of the necessity of his connection with all men and with Cosmos. Freedom is the seed—the divine seed—of this necessity. But this intuitive knowledge is mystical; neither rational nor irrational, it is prerational. And only the mystical disciplines can lift it into actionable knowledge: those deep and sound inquiries into the nature of self and being which inspired the fathers of modern European science, and which Christian civilization has neglected. This first and last knowledge of man, that he is born to be free, is the most fragile, the most arduously sustained, the most easily corrupted. But only the annihilation of man could utterly destroy it.

The Churches, for instance, despite the principle of freedom in Christian dogma, erected and defended anti-democratic institutions; frequently, like Luther's Church and modern Roman Catholicism, they have allied themselves openly with oppression. Human his-

tory is the tragic record of the recurrent articulation of the principle of freedom, and of its stumbling and failures: the failures of the infant who first strives to stand and to walk.

The liberal and radical empiricists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are another example of man's expressing and betraying his innate principle of freedom. They "believed" in democracy and their faith honored their intuition, but their conscious philosophy denied it. Their faith was the unconscious heritage of centuries of religious culture. But inasmuch as they were empiricists, they could not *know* man. And the history of the democratic movement through Rousseau to Marx is the story of a good program constantly betrayed by bad psychology. Faith which is not directed by immediate knowledge goes wrong. The trait of the empirical democrat has been his ignorance of the depths of human nature in which is rooted the intuition of freedom; and it is this ignorance which the Fascists have demoniacally exploited. In this sense the Fascists are merely parasites of the democracies which abhor them; in this sense may be understood the tragic ease with which the peaceful institutions of the democracies collapsed—rotten ere they were half ripe—into the present shambles. And in this sense the folly of presuming that the present military war, of itself, will bring us to a constructive peace becomes tragically clear. The latest betrayal of democracy is our own liberal civilization which calls itself democratic and whose

greatest virtue is that it has secularized democratic values. Let us examine it in its archetype here in the United States.

## 2

We know something of the true values of the Great Tradition of America. What are our *working* values? Comfort, not growth, is the common American norm: physical, emotional, and intellectual comfort, for whose attainment it is licit to accumulate endless mechanical gadgets and to suppress all activities of the mind and the emotions that might prove disturbing to comfort. Therefore knowledge, in the sense of search for the cosmic nature and destiny of man, is discarded, even to the point of ignoring that such knowledge is desirable or exists; discarded in favor of a cult of "information" which of course adds up to nothing, since there is in the individual no organic focus to give it form. Witness the supreme ignorance of the average American college graduate, so much more vast in the realm of life's essential nature than the ignorance of the illiterate peasant in Mexico or China.

Whether we like it or not, the essence of man is tragic, and the heart of every man and woman knows it. The health of man, in either modern rational or mythical and religious terms, is to be achieved only by the acceptance of this tragic necessity within which lies the seed of freedom. All great cultures, both Eastern and Western, have built upon this tragic law, and the sum of their constructions—art, religion, political

and natural science—is the sum of human culture. American civilization spends this inheritance recklessly, and *deliberately denies it*. Is this an exaggeration? Not at all. America's actual working civilization and culture makes axiomatic the refusal of tragedy as the norm of human life, and insists on man's capacity to attain his ends, not by self-mastery, not by acceptance of the tragic heart in every individual existence, but by an expanding and accumulating mastery of external socio-economic and mechanical conditions.

This refusal of the depths where live tragedy and the seed of its transcendence in freedom, is the premise of the folk arts of our country—radio, movie, newspaper, magazine—undoubtedly the shallowest that have ever ill-nourished a people. They subserve the ideal of comfort, the denial of tragedy, and “information” as a pre-digested surrogate for knowledge, which of course becomes organic only insofar as the individual actively contributes to it. They exile from their material those depths in which live tragedy and the human resources to transfigure it into freedom and love. Instead of revealing, they stupefy. Instead of nourishing emotion and mind, they titillate surface nerves. They lie about man. And they are so dominant, these arts of our folk, that they have corrupted with their false simplifications the ideals of our liberal arts and of our schools, which dully confuse information with education.

The common American arts, symbolically, are dependent on advertisements: that is, on an organized system for exploiting the sale of comfort and for direct-

ing the stupefied American mind toward immediate surface objects. The folk arts that subsumed and nourished all the great cultures made men's emotions pleasantly dwell within the deep and cruel realities of experience. Our folk arts shrewdly achieve the opposite, and through millions of mechanical instruments they spread spiritual and emotional anaesthesia over the land. To say that our civilization lacks art is nonsense. No age has had so much art and such bad art, in all history. Moreover, the system of large-scale production for what is complacently called information and blasphemously called *amusement*\* results in a *stereotype* of expression more deeply restrictive than open censorship. "Anything" can indeed be said, taught or written in our theoretically free American world. Actually the financial investments of mass production and mass distribution limit what may be said to the slick mediocrity of a dollar.

Consider the definition of true democracy, whose premise is freedom and whose growth is the maturing of the whole man in communion with the Cosmos and with his brothers (the community being a dimension of his wholeness). Does our American civilization form such men? Does it exalt and popularize the values and disciplines for their leadership? And consider the Jew in his essential nature, and in his wonderful harmony with the Great Tradition of American life. How can he fit into this actual world, and still remain a Jew?

\* Blasphemous because the word amusement implies the presence of the Muses.

The Jews *are* in this world. From New York to Hollywood they furnish many a leader in the devious American businesses of stupefaction. And when a Jew stands out from the common American way, through his harmony with the Great Tradition of Israel and of his country, he finds himself as remote from the community of Jews as from the swarming surfaces of American life. In this, the disease of the American Jew is even deeper than of the American Christian. For, although it is true that Jacques Maritain addresses only a minority of Catholics, Reinhold Niebuhr only a minority of Protestants, American Jewry has no Maritain and no Niebuhr.

## 3

What I have described as the common American way is the advanced way of the whole West. Perhaps we most perfectly achieve this civilization based on the denial of the human essence; but the roots and indeed the flower have long been in Europe. I cannot here again go over the proof of this, nor the causes.\* My purpose in these pages is merely to reveal the intense and dramatic position of the Jew within all the West's common disaster—and within all the West's common dawn of promise. The war; the totalitarian movements which precipitated the war; the failure of the liberal

\* For instance, what Europe in the last generation called "Americanization" i.e. a life of mechanical proliferation to implement the thrust of the individualistic will, has its archetype in Napoleon; and the great novels of this "American" way of life were published before 1850 by the Frenchmen Balzac and Stendhal.

and socialist movements in the democratic countries, whose corruption fed the totalitarian movements: the whole tragic story of our generation may be summarily entitled the collapse of a democratic structure built upon inadequate foundations. When a house falls, its crumbling sticks and stones, if they could speak and had the human need to rationalize their falling, might express their downward movement as "anti-house." The ideologies of destruction, regnant or implicit today in the West, are anti-democratic in the same way: they are rationalized reactions from a democracy which has fallen through the weight of its own failures.

The greatest threat that confronts us is that all our attention remain upon the outward foe: the Fascist, for instance; and that we ignore the foe in us, the disease in us, of which the outward enemy is a symptom. As if, when a house began to fall, we were to blame the individual bricks that crumbled, and not the architect's false plans, not the builder's faulty construction.

So long as we continue to see only the enemy outside, we shall learn nothing. More millions of men may bleed to death, more hundreds of ancient cities may blow to rubble: we shall still learn nothing. Only when we succeed in *interiorizing* our attention shall we stand upon the threshold of creative knowledge and may this world disaster become a dawn.

The common disease of our time is also the Jews'; theirs too is the tragic threat that all their blood and all their heartbreak may teach them nothing. The American Jew shares his hour of destiny with America's

hour. But no outward show of position and strength will save him if his way implicitly continues to be the denial of his health and of that universal human health which his life served, and which brought him survival.

On the other hand, because the American Jew is attainted in the disease of all Israel and in the world disease, let him find a cure for himself and he will have created a spiritual *antibody*, a cultural *antitoxin* against the world's sickness.

## 4

Since the average community of American Jews lives without deep difference from its neighbors, it lacks tension. And this lack, unconsciously sensed, troubles the Jews, who realize instinctively that every social entity must have tension: distinguishing surfaces, in order not to merge but to function with the environing world. The one common approach to such tension in our Jewish communities is supplied by anti-Semitism. The American Jews feel anti-Semitism abroad and feel it at home. They suffer, they work, they plan, in order to combat it.

Let us then begin here our application of a positive knowledge of what the Jew is, and of a positive devotion to what the Jew must continue to be. A great many excellent characterizations of anti-Semitism have been published recently. Anti-Semitism is indeed anti-Christianism, as Maurice Samuel and Jacques Maritain have shown. It is also, more broadly, anti-Europeanism, as I have endeavored to show. Most deeply of all,

perhaps, it is anti-democratism. It is the inevitable symptom of every anti-democratic movement, of any organized social impulse against the growth of human freedom in a community where Jews live as constant witnesses—beneath the accidents and denials of their immediate ways—to the truth that man's destiny is to move in brotherhood with all men toward freedom. If, therefore, the common American way, despite its democratic professions, is implicitly—insofar as it militates against human maturity and stereotypes human consciousness of expression—anti-democratic, it will also implicitly be anti-Semitic. *And the Jews themselves, insofar as they live this anti-democratic way, will also be anti-Semitic.*

We have, then, this dangerous contradiction: an American democracy devoted in its tradition and conscious love to freedom, but living a way of life which progressively weakens freedom at its sources. And within this American democracy we have a community of Jews also living a way of life which weakens democracy, which weakens America, which weakens their own Jewishness. We have communities of Jews pondering ways to combat anti-Semitism; giving their thought, their time and their funds to this good end. And then going forth into a world which generates anti-Semitism, and living with that world in that world's way!

I do not suggest that the American Jews should give up one clause of their anti-anti-Semitic programs. But humbly and earnestly I propose that they substantiate

their programs with a basic anti-anti-Semitic way of living.

An American civilization which in its actual life and in the formation of its youth, through its education and its arts, denies its Great Tradition, is sending this youth to Europe and the Pacific to die against that tradition's open foes. It will beat the enemy in battle; but unless it combats knowingly the foe in its own way of life, it will find soon enough that the enemy is wearing the uniform of its own victorious army. Similarly, the American Jews will strive in vain to be Jews, will strive in vain to defend themselves against the anti-Semites, so long as their dominant way of life is itself nourishment to the social and psychological sources of anti-Semitism.

## 5

But let us suppose that the Jews here in America do begin at this beginning. And if they take themselves seriously as Jews, if they believe truly in the God of their fathers, and in the Word which has sustained them through the three tragic and glorious millennia of Western man, they will begin at this beginning. They will be concerned first of all with themselves. It will be revealed to them with the urgency of crisis that they walk into their house of worship from a way of life which denies explicitly that worship; that they leave their honorable deliberations against the enemy of Israel, who is the enemy of Man, to return into a way of life that feeds this enemy. Therefore,

they will root out from their common ways the cult of comfort, the evasion of man's tragic essence, the practice of sleazy and stupefying arts. They will measure their way of life against the Fear of God, upon which all Europe and all America stands. And they will make the choice, not of cowards pacting cravenly and stupidly with death, and rationalizing death when it comes, but as men daring to elect to live.

And what will be the result? The immediate result will of course be travail and new forms of struggle. But insofar as these Jews face their own life problem, they will find that they contribute to the life of all Jews. Insofar as they react in defensive creativity to their own need, they will find that they have constituted themselves a re-agent for the defense and creation of Man. The leadership of American Israel in Israel will begin to have meaning. The contribution of American Jews to America and to modern man will begin to have meaning.

### C. PREFACE TO A PROGRAM

Israel faces the deepest crisis of its history since the destruction of the Second Temple. And at its solemn hour, the American Jew, spiritually sick with the malady that menaces the world, is in command. This must not dismay us. Not for the first time might health rise from disease, vision from the urgent need of it.

When Rome destroyed the Jewish homeland, the Rabbis saved Israel by building "a Fence around the Law." We need not romanticize juridic Judaism; its shrunken rigidity symbolized Israel's defensive state within the violence of Europe, yet did not protect the Jews from many superstitions of their barbarous neighbors. But to interpret this protective culture as mere legalism is nonsense. No people could have survived those dangerous centuries without deep and constant food: the only food for Israel from its beginning was the vision of the Prophets, and the Torah-Talmud kept it alive. The life-giving form that the Law and commentaries took was a shrewd adaptation to the culture of all the West, from the time of Moses to the industrial revolution. In a hundred ways, the nineteenth century dissolved the bone and tissue of its form. No more than Christian Europe and America, was Israel ready to replace it. I have discussed some of the diseases of this great transition; many were given self-flattering names

. . . liberalism, romantic and economic individualism, political materialism, pragmatism . . . by the bourgeois democracies parading proudly to their doom. Israel shared them all.

It was no accident that this nineteenth century saw the birth of political Zionism. The ghettos were gone; the old way of life of the Jews was going. Israel took on the dangerous freedom of an open world at the moment when its inward defenses and nurture were being lost. Zionism, as distinct from the modest proposal that Palestine be freed for Jewish colonists, was the old Messianism in a new body; and the fact that this body was compounded of a number of the ideas of the Europe of 1880 and 1890—ideas neither practical nor Jewish, revealed Israel's confusion. Some Zionists spoke the stylish nationalist language of the little countries: the Jews like the Danes, the Irish, or the Montenegrans, were a *people*, and entitled to their national state. Others, more profound, saw in Palestine a commonwealth where the ancient spirit of the Jews might be reborn. Even the best of the Zionists did not ask how their people, whose way of life had survived countless other little nations after they had lost their homeland, could now base their new way on nationalism, doomed in the widening economy of the world; or on subservience to the British Empire (equally doomed); or on forced political dominion over the Arabs, who may be expected to distrust Israel so long as Israel comes to them with the dishonest passport of imperialist power.

The previous essays discussed the impotence of the Jews' anti-anti-Semitic action issuing from a way of life that inherently nurtures the forces of anti-Semitism. Zionism appears to suffer from a similar false base. The deep impulse to give Israel a cultural center and the homeless Jews a home is stultified by opportunist methods, which either ignore the nature of Israel (for over half its existence a Diaspora "nation") or endanger its spirit in the emotional will to give it a conventional political body. Because it articulates the mass yearning of millions of Jews, Zionism is respectable. Because of the beauty of the humble *Chalutzim*, it is lovable. Thus far its leaders have not revealed the deep perspective, of which political insight is a dimension, the life-giving, unity-giving knowledge without which Israel could not have survived. Until Zionism in some new form incarnates this knowledge, it will remain a fractional movement.

Often the enemy from his distance discerns our general forms better than we, too fondly involved with ourselves. Consider Hitler, the enemy of Europe. He saw the impotence of its countless frontiers against the imperious trend of an industrial system toward mass production and untrammeled mass distribution. His way of "unity" was death; to level Europe downward to the simplicity of his demonic hate. But this hideous caricature of Europe's necessary wholeness should not make us blind to what Hitler saw, lest love be less wise than madness. In his hate of the Jews, also, Hitler may help us. The Jew as "good European" was his foe; the

Jew as guardian of universal values was the face of all he struck to destroy. But when Hitler called the bourgeois Jew of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries *parasitic*, in his twisted way he was right.\* The commercial and professional Jew, insofar as he lives by the exploiting capitalist classes, has been like his gentile brother, parasitic; the intellectual Jew, insofar as he disavows the deep truth of his tradition in favor of the surface values of our culture, has been like his gentile brother, parasitic.

Hitler's myth of the "Great Conspiracy," of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, with "their secret sinister alliance" of all Jews, capitalists and revolutionists alike, to conquer the world: is it not a demonic caricature of the truth? a different kind of truth which Hitler discerns and hates, but which all good men, not alone Jews, will love if only they discern it. The lines of this Great Conspiracy are drawn in the Old Testament. By the seed of Abraham, all men are to attain the knowledge of God and of their brotherhood. The Prophets had no other theme. Within it Jesus preached. Within it, as within an Ark, the Jews of the Diaspora have sailed the stormy flooding centuries. If, from Mosaic to modern times, Israel had not *lived* this Great Conspiracy, there would be no Jews in the world to earn the hate of Hitler.

\* Of course, this was not why Hitler hated the Jew. He had no objection to parasites; from the hoodlums of the German cities to the Lavals and Quislings abroad he built his "world order" on the parasitic excreta of the bourgeois order.

## 2

Here is a beginning for our Program. *The Great Conspiracy exists*; and every Jew by inheritance has it within his conscience and his blood, however his words and his deeds and his fears protest against it. But the complex modern Diaspora has nurtured a far deeper variety of minds and values among Jews than divided Pharisee, Sadducee, Judeo-Christian, Hellenist; later Kabalist, Karaite, Chassid. There are several *basic* types of Jew today. There is the Jew, at home in the gentile world and functioning best within it *as a Jew*. There is the Jew, also a product of Jewish nurture, who functions best in the gentile world without insistence or awareness that his values are Jewish. There is the Jew whose orthodoxy feels at home in the land of the stranger. There is the orthodox Jew who longs for Zion. There is the Zionist who would make Palestine a secular socialist home for the sorely oppressed of Israel. A morbid error in which the Jews have fallen is the delusion that one formula can be found, as in the infinitely simpler realm of natural science, to explain men or a nation or man. We must overcome it. Acceptance of the Great Conspiracy will be a lowest common denominator—and a highest! preserving a pluralistic harmony for Jews, who in economic-cultural terms are as apart as Poland and California. Their active interpretations of the Great Conspiracy will differ, but within it as premise or matrix

the quarrels that now rise from totally alien views of what the Jews are and of what they must do, will be the tensions and strengths of a richly composed organic Whole.

Our premise can be made dynamic without breaking its unity. We have seen man's democratic destiny to be the inherent Jewish knowledge of man's nature. The form of this destiny varies with the ages; it could not be the same in a pastoral as in an industrial world. But always it tended, as consciousness widened, to include all men; and always, as consciousness deepened, *the whole man*. "All men" and "the whole man" are dimensions of one organic body. We have seen how a democracy of all men that does not nourish the whole man turns into a regimented herd; and how a cult of the whole man which ignores each man's just relation with his neighbors becomes a lie. We have explained the deep harmony between Israel's fate in its Great Conspiracy and that political form of it which it nourished, the democratic creed of the American nation. Now, ere we go on, we must insist that this harmony is not identity. If the American Jew were required merely to accept our American Constitution, in even its broadest interpretation, his Judaism might well vanish. Of course the American Jew can be neither a good American nor a good Jew if his deeds, however disguisedly, foster the anti-democratic forces that pul-lulate in American life. But merely to refrain from such fostering will hardly distinguish him from other conscientious Americans; will hardly keep him a Jew.

The roots of American democracy are religious; our national principle of the relations between men is based implicitly on the sense of Man which the Judeo-Christian religions developed through their sense of the relation between man and God. But this is not to say that American democracy itself is religious. If, however, the ends of secular democracy move too remotely away from their religious roots, and if the roots die, democracy sickens. A program for American Israel, which is not to fall into the trap of the assimilationists, dare not content itself with ethical democratic practices garnished by quotations from the Prophets. It must be a *root* action. This will relate it harmoniously with what is good in American life; it will not make it identical with all that is good in American life.

Our Great Conspiracy, demoniacally caricatured by the anti-Semites, is in essence the Covenant of Abraham with God which suffuses all Israel's ages: luminously in the Prophets, more dimly in the hard years of Europe when Israel clung to the 613 Commandments. This faith of Abraham in his love for the God of Being, who, for men, must always be the immanent God of human beings. It prepares him to sacrifice his son; to destroy his seed which God has promised shall fructify the earth. Emotionally, spiritually, Abraham kills his son, yet the son lives. This mystery is the meaning of Israel, who survives only insofar as it is ready to die; is the meaning of Man, who grows only as he is ready to die. Faith is the wrong word here. The power of Abraham's faith is knowledge. Only be-

cause Abraham knows God—*knows the nature of Being*, has he the strength to sacrifice what is dearer to him than his life; and has he the strength to survive.

Here is the premise for Israel today; let the Polish Zionist and the American Jewish radical or poet each interpret it according to his own devotion. It means that in every crisis of modern life, under his Covenant with God, to serve truth, love mercy and do justice, the Jew must be ready to die, the Jew must *know enough* to die: even to die in his son and in his seed—in order that Israel may live. That this faith of Abraham was no dream, no vague ideal: that it is organic knowledge, the centuries have proven. No natural law has been more ruthlessly, more objectively tested. But the modern Jew must not forget that this organic knowledge is something more than understanding; indeed it may live without understanding, which is a far more narrow intellectual thing. Organic knowledge is action. A basic element of the knowledge of Abraham was his actual leading away his son. Man cannot organically know the good and do evil. What he does is the physiology of his knowledge. This—this alone, explains Israel's survival.

## 3

And this brings us to certain minimal points that issue from our premise.

- i. The Jew cannot encourage or appease the forces of social injustice. To the extent of his capacity (ignorance has never been permitted to the Jew) he must

study to know what they are. (And he will find them in the very roots and body of our capitalist system.)

ii. Insofar as he is caught, like his Christian brother, in the sins of our social-economic system for his daily bread, he must not starve. But the Jew must free himself of ease and pride in his success, he must know his complicity and his sin.

iii. At every risk, he must support the forces of social justice, be loyal to the classes that are its implements and to the groups that represent it.

iv. The average Jew cannot be expected to become a hero or a saint. But without compromise, he must shun leaders whose success and power are won, however "respectably," in collaboration with the forces of social injustice and exploitation. Equally, he must avoid leaders whose gift is predominantly for the kind of political opportunism which has characterized the miserable "democratic" statesmen of past decades—the men whose works have been war and disaster.

v. He must not be content with recognizing anti-democratic forces in politics and economics; this would be to limit his action to secular ends that fall short of their roots in religion and the arts: the realms of *the whole man*. He must know the treacherous anti-social trends in our folk arts (newspaper, radio, movie, magazine) and in our schools with their shallow cult of information. He must know how the basic malnutrition of our arts and schools shrinks the mind and emotion of the people, and breeds that confu-

sion which times of crisis make into the opportunity for evil men.

vi. He must not be satisfied with the slogans of our democracy and with its political techniques. They are needed but they are not enough; for they cannot nourish *the whole man*; cannot touch the corrosive ferment among our people that may ripen into the "soft" fascism that will be—long after Hitler and Hitlerism are destroyed—our world's abiding danger.\*

vii. He, the American Jew, must never forget that because of his economic power and citizenship in a still democratic land, he is today the guardian of all Israel. His cure of his own disease will help all Jews; and, since the disease is general, all men. Because of America's strategic place in shaping the course of history tomorrow toward democracy or away from it, the American Jew's loyal enactment of the Great Conspiracy is linked more immediately with the fate of man than it has been since Jerusalem and Alexandria served to create Europe.

\* For instance, no Jew dare be content with "the Four Freedoms." He must look deeper. "Freedom from Want" can be the slogan of a slave society; "Freedom from Fear" fails to take note of the fears that are the warning-signals of intelligence, and of the Fear of God which must make men tremble lest they fall short of their high destiny; "Freedom of Speech" is no guarantee against the stereotypes and censorship of a money-controlled radio and press; "Freedom of Worship" will not save us, today, from merely worshiping our bellies and our machines.

## 4

This brings us to the deeper, less visible part of our program. Individual wisdom lived in many ancient lands: India, Egypt, China, Greece. The supreme original contribution of the Hebrews was to *communize* wisdom, first to their own, then to all the peoples. Within this social consciousness of the Jews matured the first *whole* person. Even Socrates and Plato did not achieve the complete sense of the person. The individual wisdom of the Hindus, on the other hand, never achieved the dimension of social consciousness, the *will* to naturalize the earth for the human spirit. Eastern esoteric wisdom remains forever, in respect of the progress of humanity as a whole, defeatist. But as the idea of the person rose in Palestine, the social wisdom which had nourished him grew rigid. Conflict followed, dramatized in anarchic sects like the Essenes, and in men like Paul, whose expansive Jewish genius eventually burst from the Law. For seventeen centuries the desperate need of Israel's social body to survive absorbed most of the energy of the people. The Jews seemed to lose the ultimate light and grace of personal freedom which the Law alone cannot fulfill, although it nourished its beginnings. Mature spiritual creation comes only from the person. This is why, for generations, Israel's creative genius has lived largely outside the Law. This is why, to become again the active home of the *whole man*, Israel needs a fresh experience. The

still unmined treasure lives embedded within Jewish history.

The finest personal flower of Jewish wisdom is Jesus. Jesus was a man in whom the cosmic consciousness was so strong that its ecstasy became the norm of his life. At every moment, he knew what Abraham knew when he led his son to sacrifice; what Moses knew upon Sinai; what the Prophets knew when they saw man so lucidly as to foresee his course;—and what the common Israelite strove to “know” through the methodology of his daily devotions. The knowledge was so immense in Jesus, that literally he knew nothing else. Time was not; Rome was not; the plodding handwork of the Pharisees was burned away; the Kingdom of Heaven literally was within him. A millennium of divine methodical search flowered in this man. But Jesus was a Jew and therefore moved by the social sense of his folk for whom knowledge could not be private. He lived in a sick age. Rome’s “peace” smelled of death, and in all lands men believed in the Last Days and longed for redemption. In other peoples, the desperate state of man under the deadness of Rome’s “perfect law” inspired the mystery religions by which privileged individuals “died” in the body of a god and were “resurrected.” In Palestine, this hunger for salvation took the concrete traditional form of belief in the Messiah. Jesus felt this pressure of his people’s anguish and of their Messianic tradition. Within himself, he knew the freedom of his own wondrous cosmic consciousness: a freedom that is the seed of God in every man.

Because of his Jewish need to share with his brethren, to turn his personal ecstasy into the rapture of all; and because of the traditional Prophetic language in which he thought, he came to believe that he was the Messiah. Salvation, however, as he hungered to impart it, was immediate, not political; eternity was here, within time, upon the moment of men's hearing. What he knew and said of "the Kingdom of Heaven" was *the truth*. His generous weakness was to transpose his truth, almost despite himself, into the traditional Messianic terms. His flaw was to believe that his knowledge was communicable: a Jewish error, if you will, since Moses and the Prophets had all stressed the communal nature of salvation.

Rome and the Jewish priesthood translated the Messiahship of Jesus into common political terms; and for this, Jesus was killed. Whether he knew he would die; whether he hoped for some miraculous rescue, is beyond the scope of my opinion. Like Abraham giving his beloved son, he was ready.

Then, through the Hellenized Jews, the profound Jewish Myth of the Suffering Servant of the Lord merged with the abstract *logos* of the Platonists and with the bloody god of the pagan mystery religions. Israel's finest vintage, diluted and corrupted, flowed into barbarous Europe to transfigure it into the deepest and the most potent of man's cultures.\*

\* Why Europe developed this overwhelming *power*, symbolized by the *conquistadores* of Spain and the Machine, has never been sufficiently analyzed. In several of my books I have shown that the personal will released by Judeo-Christian culture was a primary

Israel could not accept this Jesus become Christ; become the abrogation of the Law to which Israel, threatened in its very life, desperately clung. For this Christ, Israel was too mature. And not mature enough to accept the impossible Goodness of Jesus, which could not live among men. Yet this paradoxical tension between God's will and man's deed is the basic theme of all Israel's history; the drama of Jesus was merely its most complete expression.

Israel's classic solution of this *impossibilism*, which is the nature of man—the insoluble conflict between his transcendent and his animal dimensions—was the dream of a Messiah of Power projected into the future. Christianity now placed this solution in the historic present, in terms alien to the Jewish critical mind. The tragic truth remains, that in rejecting with Christ their own Jesus (as they had to, in that hour and that form) the Jews were forced to deny the deepest vision of Man which their own culture had produced. There was no element in the cosmic consciousness and in the sacrificial role of Jesus, which could not be duplicated in Jewish writings. But where was there another form of it so visible and poignant?

Having implanted this seed of itself in pagan Europe, there to give birth to the independent Christian culture, Israel recoiled—and became itself a seed em-  
factor in the discovery not alone of America but of the natural laws whose application made the machine age possible. It is not accidental that the British, pioneers of science and the machine, were likewise pioneers of the belief in *the will's* primacy: for instance, Pelagius and Duns Scotus.

bedded in the Christian world. Now, through the centuries another organic mystery ripens. With the age of science, Christendom can discard those very elements, magical and absolutistic, which recommended the Myth of Christ to the pagan need of magical absolute solutions. The enlightened mind of Christianity begins to free Christ of his pagan provincial forms and to release the Jewish elements in the great Myth. Meanwhile the forces of "enlightenment" had begun to dissolve the old body of the Jewish Law. By the nineteenth century Israel stood comparatively free in a scientific culture—and stood naked! With the disintegration of the Law, the Jew's knowledge of the person, from whose intuitive beginnings the Law had been builded, and of which the drama of Jesus was the adorable expression, had grown dim; when it was most sorely needed! And through the ages of European persecution it has become clear that Israel itself is an embodiment of this drama's meaning.

Here is a potential convergence between a still unconscious Israel and a still faltering Christianity, which must prove as fruitful to mankind as the convergence twenty centuries ago of Jew and Hellene!

I do not refer of course to the false convergences of Jews, "freed" of the Synagogue and of gentiles, "freed" of their churches, who meet upon the flat lands of empiricism. I do not refer to the pastors who shallow Jesus into a "very good man" or to the rabbis who assimilate Judaism to tepid Protestantism and ethical culture. I do refer to profound men of a new militant

Church like Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr: religious minds who read the great stories of both Testaments as psychological truth beyond rationalist concepts; truth which reveals the insufficiency of empiric thought to explain man; the organic truth of man that only men's flesh and blood can utter. By the insight of such leaders as I have named, the core of the meaning of Jesus is revealed: the immersion, tragic and glorious, of the Transcendent within history, the endless counterpoint of human victory and failure, death and transfiguration.

Even in the Roman Catholic Church there is a similar convergence. While the Roman Hierarchy goes its corrupt way, cynically, with the Fascists, a saintly theological poet like Jacques Maritain becomes far more than a defender of the lives of the Jews: his integral humanism, his deep insight into Israel's character, indeed his own personal life, reveal his high vision of Israel and the monistic influence of the Prophets' social sense upon him.

The convergence on the side of the Jews has been less intellectual. The poets lead the way. Great Jewish artists like Marc Chagall and Jacob Epstein imbue the Crucifixion with Jewish meaning. The Yiddish folk bard, Scholem Asch, devotes his best years to creating what might be called a "primitive Jewish" Jesus and Paul. However one may judge the literary value of *The Nazarene* and *The Apostle*, these remarkable novels are historic signs of the convergence: they place the two great Christian heroes where they belong;

within the plasm of Jewish life, within the tradition of Jewish knowledge.

Equally striking, as a sign, are the two monumental works of the Hebrew historian, Joseph Klausner: *Jesus of Nazareth* and *From Jesus to Paul*. Here are scholarship and psychological research in lieu of the storyteller's afflatus. But if the convergence of two such distinct Jewish leaders upon Jesus is meaningful, no less so is the fact that both their interpretations miss the essential significance of Jesus for Israel in its modern crisis. Both make of him a superlatively pious Pharisee, and of Paul a fanatic who in his overwhelming need to bring the light of Israel to the world is finally forced to sacrifice the Law. Asch narrates the supernatural element of the drama uncritically, naively; Klausner interprets it with a sympathetic rationalism not far from Renan's. Neither reaches the profound prophetic insight of the great Christians I have named, who read the Myth in the language of organic symbolism, by which alone—beyond syllogism, science and supernaturalism, the *physiology* of the human spirit can be experienced by man.

Both Asch and Klausner, both the naive poet and the modern scholar, reveal the shrinkage of Jewish insight, its present lack of the direct organic vision which must save Israel in this dangerous hour when it stands alone, bereft of the old defensive wisdom of its Law, under a world that threatens (and not by massacre chiefly) to destroy it.

## 5

All I have said is a preface to the program which men and communities, strong in knowledge and love, must build. When will they begin?

When they begin, the periphery of Israel, as in all its crises, may fall away. But the heart, the Prophets' Remnant, will again grow solid. Israel will have leaders who can lead. Israel will confront such crying problems as the butchery of the Jews in Europe and Britain's betrayal of Palestine (predictable from the beginning) with weapons stronger than sentiment, shrewder than the opportunist makeshifts of pressure politics. Israel will have harmony among Zionists and Jews who claim their home as America, Germany, Poland; and an active inward principle to defend them all from the forces of social injustice and of materialism, which threaten Israel with corruption more deeply than Hitler with murder. Renewed knowledge of its dignity will purge Israel of appeasers, purify it of the defensiveness that comes from fear, of the fear that comes from ignorance. To converge with this new, profound element in Christian vision will not turn the Jews into Christians, as it will not turn the Christians into Jews. But two harmonious minorities in an overwhelmed and menacing world, captained today by shallow men, will stand in strength together.

Most important of all, the convergence, by which the Jews may now claim the symbolic meaning of Jesus,

will restore to them the modern meaning of the Prophets, and *the timeless meaning of Israel*. Israel has been the Suffering Servant, a mysterious incarnation of the Transcendent within history; not because it suffered—other little nations suffered, but because it *knew*; not because it died—other little nations died, but because it *knew* and therefore could not die. Even when its knowledge grew dim, instinctively, by the momentum of the Prophets in its daily life, Israel lived on; Israel was the Suffering Servant. For that, though the bourgeois Jews deny it in their way of life, the best Jews are crucified today. But all their pain will not avail them; its meaning will be stultified and lost in the blood-soaked sands of time, if knowledge does not once more grow strong in Israel.

Here, too, the story of Jesus can serve. His drama would lose its meaning, if Jesus had not *known* its meaning; known the fatality of his life; known that the supremely Good must be forever immolated that man may live; if as an integral part of his knowledge and love of life, he had not been ready to die.

Israel cannot continue to *be*, unless Israel begins again to *know*: and to know is to *do*.

As Abraham knew he was “called,” as Jesus knew he was “sent,” and that the Kingdom of Heaven—which is freedom—was within him, and that he must live and die to impart it to his brothers; thus Israel must know the Mystery today which Israel’s history has realized in the world. Then, and then only, the Jews’ Great

Conspiracy will become again the premise of a cogent Jewish program.

The other points of the program will follow, being organic with the premise. There will be again a universal reason, a universal knowledge for the separateness of the Jews. That separateness will be again their bond with all the world.

While that bond of knowledge and of serving holds, the world may crucify the Jews, but it will never let them die.

1943-4

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**POSTSCRIPT**

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## POSTSCRIPT

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PHILOSOPHERS and poets have told us (only recently have scientists concurred) that words do not equate with truths; at best they point *toward* them. Nowhere is this inadequacy of names more manifest than in the profound, complex, millennial event of Israel. Forever striving to cover the truth about the Jews with such terms as "nation," "people," "race," "church," we rarely realize that we fail, not because Israel is formless, but because our words are faulty. Examples of this danger are, I believe, to be found in Reinhold Niebuhr's introduction.

He calls the Jews a "nation," striving nobly, but vainly, to be a "church." He lauds Jewish spirituality for "combining heaven and earth as it were. . . . It does not separate soul from body or mind from nature but understands man and history in the unity of man's physical and spiritual life:"—an insight which implies that the very terms he has used, when taken separately, cannot be precise. He differs from what he calls my "sacrifice of one side of prophetic teaching: its sense of the relation of man to nature and necessity, for the other side: its sense of man's relation to the eternal, the universal, that is, to God." He assumes that I seek—not a dynamic accommodation of Jewish life-values

to the modern world, but a "solution;" and finds that I "state" rather than "solve" the religious problem of the Jews; that I "underestimate their purely mundane problem of existing as a people" who, he says, cannot be expected, in the large, to rise to that prophetic vision which only the individual prophetic genius ever has attained. Yet his own description of Jewish spirituality is, at the least, a warning that mutually exclusive words may not adequately fit the truth of the problem.

Indeed, it is Reinhold Niebuhr's deep concept of *tensions* in history between the natural and the transcendent, time and eternity:—tensions whose contradictions, never solved and ever present, constitute the dynamic and tragic truth of human nature, which might best be employed to corroborate my interpretation. No conventional phraseology like "church" or "people," "doctrine" or "ethic," can satisfactorily explain the Jews, precisely because at every moment their reality partakes of the tension between what men must name by rationally contradictory symbols. The Jews are not a "mere" nation or people; they are not a "mere" church; their beliefs are not "mere" dogmas; nor are their ways "mere" ethical or pragmatic or folkloric rules of conduct. By the same token, the individual American Jew is not a "mere" individual, not a "mere" American, not a "mere" Jew. Of course, this paradox is not peculiar to the Jew; it holds with all men and has its root, as I have said, in the fact that we have only an

essentially dualistic language to explain an essentially unitary world. The words serve until we consider the organisms which are the truth. For knowledge of the truth we require indivisible combinations of words . . . symbols . . . as in art and Myth, and actions as in history. And as I have endeavored to show, the difficulty is extreme with the Jews because their history is indeed the symbol of an essence: an essential truth of man's complex reality. Jews differ from other men, not in the elements of their individual make-up, but in the proportion of these elements and their relative intensity; and because one of these elements is, precisely, Jewish history and tradition. Israel's refusal to be categorized under any names is most striking because of the most striking degree of unity between what Dr. Niebuhr calls the "two sides" . . . time and eternity . . . in Jewish culture.

I point this out, here and again, because I wish to consider closely Dr. Niebuhr's objection that I neglect "the side of nature and necessity" in my treatment of the present Jewish crisis. The unusual unity of "both sides" in Israel's life; even more, the dominant suffusion of the spiritual in the humblest, most common acts of Jewish behavior (witness the 613 Commandments); the truth, which Reinhold Niebuhr admits, that this suffusion alone explains Israel's otherwise miraculous perseverance through the ages, make it extremely dangerous to advocate as "practical for survival" any one-sided policy for the Jews which by its

very nature would *denature* Israel and disintegrate the unitary principle by which it has survived. Why, unlike other small peoples in the paths of greater ones, did the Jews not disappear in time? Because when they were overwhelmed by such vast outward material forces as Egypt, Babylon, Rome, and Holy Rome, they could avail themselves of a certain survival-force. What was this force? It was their prophetic vision of a particular relation *in time* with the universal and eternal. That it did help them to survive is proof of its reality. The peculiar suffusion of the two sides of man's nature in Jewish life was a principle of strength, because it was a principle close to *man's real nature*: This explains why, against stupendous odds, the Jews survived. It explains also the Prophets' insistence on talking politics in terms of the eternal. If statecraft is to be measured by results, the Hebrew Prophets were certainly the world's most successful politicians. This is the precedent by which, in discussing the Jews' survival problem today—that is, in time, I have ventured to stress the urgent Jewish need of reviving their *reality-principle*: a cogent relationship, today, in modern terms, with the eternal.

The same kind of counterpoint was in my mind when I wrote: "To be a Jew, merely because I was born one, is shameful." To this, Reinhold Niebuhr takes exception, and replies: "It is no more shameful to be born a Jew than to be born an American or Frenchman." First let us define "shame," as a result of a conscious failure to live up to the responsibility of one's own

nature. The term is relative; but it is never individualistic—unless we admit the absurdity that the individual is responsible for his individual nature. The truth is, of course, that no individual's responsibility is limited by his individual choices. No individual elects, for instance, to be born a man—or to be born at all. Suppose he were, in consequence, to say: "I was born a man through no will or choice of my own. Therefore it is not incumbent upon me to make any effort to behave like a man; and if I elect to behave like an animal—a hog or a wolf—I shall do so." We should then have the right to say to him: "To be a man, as you are, merely because you were born a man, is shameful."

The Jew, whether or not he wills it or likes it or knows it, is born with the collective responsibility of millennial Israel within him. If his deeds do not enact this responsibility, I say that he is shameful. And the fact is that such Jews (they are myriad) feel shame! The *inertial* Jew, he who is merely born a Jew, feels shame! This is not theory; it is psychological fact, palpably and immensely proven. Only the Jew who, to some degree, *enacts* his Jewishness is ever saved from the shame within his heart. To be born a Frenchman or an American is also to inherit, whether one wishes or not, a burden of collective responsibility. The difference is of degree; is the difference between the histories and cultures of Israel on the one hand, and of France or America on the other.

This invalidates any too strict analogy between Israel as a minority nation and another—Norway, for example.

Again, we face realities, not theories. The Norwegian has his homeland, a concrete soil which he has managed to identify with his life through many generations. While he lives in Norway, he too will feel shame if he betrays or fails to defend Norway. He is free to emigrate, of course, to North Dakota and forget Norway. That is his one way out. The Jews' "homeland" for three millennia and more has been far less Palestine than the Abrahamic Covenant with God. He too is free to leave his "homeland" (countless Jews have done it) by assimilation with other peoples. But so long as he continues to call himself a Jew, he carries his "homeland" with him; and if he betrays it or fails to defend and nourish it, he will feel shame. Therefore, whether the generous gentile like it or not, "to be a Jew, merely because I was born one, is shameful."

The "mere" individual is a lie; he does not exist. This is true of all men; and all men, whether they know it or not, are implicated with one another and involved in the Covenant with God. Therefore, "merely to be a man because I was born a man," is also shameful. The Jew's distinction, here again, is of intensity and focus. His lapse into "mere" individual responsibility brings on a more articulate sickness, because his heritage of collective responsibility is heavier and sharper.

One can be only grateful to Reinhold Niebuhr for generously defending the individual Jew against my demand that he act "as if he were a prophet." But

the demand is not mine; it is history's, it is *reality's* demand upon him! The fact is that an Irishman (for instance) can quite comfortably survive without a prophetic sense of his relation with the eternal; and that a Jew cannot! The Irishman's inescapable share of the collective responsibility of his folk does not include so pervasive and so explicit a Covenant with God, a "pact" which he must fulfill by his everyday behavior, a "pact" which is his homeland and his art. Whether I or Dr. Niebuhr like it or not, the Jew's responsibility and the Jew's burden, are greater; the Jew must *do more* in order to escape the shame which, we have seen, rises from the collective heart that beats within him. His sole "way out" is to cease calling himself a Jew; to cease being a Jew. Millions of "born" Jews have taken this course, and I fail to see why it is not more respectable than to remain an *inertial* Jew.\*

This is why my insistence is correct that Israel today . . . the Israel that longs to survive . . . must re-forge in modern terms its relation with the eternal, in order to continue to exist in time. This is why any program, such as Zionism, if it neglects the "eternal side" of Judaism, will find that it has neglected the "practical side" of Israel's survival.

Nor must we forget that, in Saint Paul's words, "a

\* I realize, of course, that many Jews are persecuted, even murdered, today, as Jews, without being given the choice of ceasing to be Jews, which some, doubtless, if given the chance, might elect. For these unfortunates, casualties of our hideous age, there is no balm and no immediate solution. But their pathetic plight, although it touches our hearts, is not within the scope of the essential subject of this volume.

little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." It is not necessary that all Jews, or even a large minority of Jews at any given time, act, in the sense that Dr. Niebuhr seems to believe that I demand, as if they were prophets. No large minority of Jews have ever risen to this eminence. I have been careful to make this clear: at no hour of Israel's history were the majority of Jews better or deeper or wiser, in their individual capacities, than the general run of man. The function of the Law, as a communal methodology of behavior, was to spread the "leaven that leaveneth the whole lump;" to make it feasible for the average Jewish man and woman to live—without direct prophetic insight—according to the prophetic Covenant. This "leaven," I have been at pains to prove, is dying. I do not demand that all Jews become or re-create this leaven, actively. I do claim that until Jewish leadership in modern terms rediscovers the unitary principle of life which was the Prophets' vision and which *willing* Jews may again follow, there will be no true leaven; and in consequence the Jewish mass which has survived destruction because of it will be without the sole force, the sole survival-principle, that alone can save it. Israel faces death, not through persecution—but through inanition.

But this does not invalidate Reinhold Niebuhr's legitimate plea that the Jews, as a minority people, be given the minimal security of equal rights among all the peoples. Of course, I agree. And I agree that Dr. Niebuhr, as a Christian leader, is right to make this point and to stress it. But *the Jew* cannot rest there. *He* must de-

vote himself to Israel's inward problem. My quarrel is with the Jews who, too often in recent years, have acted as if this secular claim of minority rights were the crux of their problem for survival. It never was. It never will be. As Reinhold Niebuhr properly points out: if liberal democracy were to spread and to give the Jews their secular rights, and if the Jews were no longer to find within themselves the particular form of a universal principle to keep them "separate," they would vanish through assimilation: obliterated more effectively by this "tolerance" than they could ever be, by the intolerance of the anti-Semites.

One more point: Dr. Niebuhr seems to believe that the fact of the Jews' "being faced with annihilation" should keep us from making demands on them of "the highest reaches of ethical freedom." "How," he asks, "can the particular be a servant of the universal, if the life of the particular has no security?" It is good that he, the conscientious and noble leader among Christians, should insist on this security for the Jews; it is just that he should favor Palestine as a partial guarantee for such security. But the truth here, too, is dialectical. Is it not necessary to remind ourselves that if the Jews—or any peoples—have made conquests of ethical freedom, it has ever been without "security"; and that a people, like a person, may be moved by physical danger to spiritual insights which, in turn, become implements against the physical danger? This is particularly true of the Jews, whose spirituality has been predominantly realistic and naturalistic; free of the trans-

cedental “escapes” of the Greeks and the Hindus. Was it not the crises of Egypt, Babylon, Rome, that hardened the Jews’ awareness of their spiritual Covenant into practical methodologies of behavior and survival? Think of Akiba’s epigram: “Build a Fence about the Law.” What more perfect synthesis could be imagined, of a time of mortal danger with eternity!

Whatever the humaneness of gentile or Jew may desire, the truth is, that Israel cannot escape the exceptional tribute of its great heritage: the trial that must be borne by greatness! The usual Jew, I repeat, is a usual man. But being a Jew (in ways more complex and far deeper than the mere fact of belonging to a minority group) he has to meet *unusual* problems of adjustment—to meet them with *usual* personal equipment. This paradox was solved in the past by the religious culture which gave ordinary Jewish men and women an extraordinary methodology for survival: a means that *worked* because of its high reality content.

Some modern equivalent must be created. Otherwise, the Mystery of Israel’s survival will have run its course; the Jews will cease to be—even though their epigones should achieve in Palestine, like the Egyptians or the Greeks, the small security of a “state” among other puny nations.

For the Mystery of Israel has been stark realism: a profoundest revelation—if only Jews and other men would read it—of man’s real nature. The utterances of religious genius are always the best psychology. When

Amos quoted Jehovah as saying to the seed of Abraham: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities," he spoke not merely divination, but what was to be a fact, proven through nearly three millennia of mundane action. All I have attempted to say is within these lightning words of Amos, which are as true and as new as if he stood, not among the herdsmen of Tekoa but upon the market ways of Manhattan.

This Postscript must stop, lest it become too much of a new beginning. The deep problems raised in the conscientious mind by contemplation of the Mystery of Israel and of its present plight can never finally be solved, since life has no solution. But they cannot be even adequately considered in the form of casual essays. Such efforts as mine may serve only to state . . . *to state* the questions.

To ask the right questions is the beginning of truth. The shallowness of our age (and of modern Israel) may be revealed best in the fact that—among our plethora of "information" and discussion, almost nowhere does one hear the basic, the right, questions. Therefore I have named the last division of this book a preface to a program. The entire work is a mere stating of certain questions. It might be called the preface to a book I hope to write, if time and circumstance—and my not too great unworthiness—permit it.





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